Commentary

December 1995

Race, Racism, and the Present Moment

Arch Puddington
Joshua Muravchik

Can Giuliani Save New York?
Irwin M. Stelzer

Israel—With Grandchildren
Norman Podhoretz

The Man Who Wrote Too Much
Joseph Epstein

Grownups and "Kids"
Jonah Goldberg

Words, Music, Opera
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Dropping the Bomb: An Exchange
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Books in Review
Ruth R. Wisse • Kenneth Silber • James W. Muller • Gabriel Schoenfeld

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American Jewish Committee

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Commentary
December 1995

Letters from Readers

Dropping the Bomb

To the Editor:

As a historian who has great respect for the conservative tradition (and who dedicated his first book to the memory of Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War under Roosevelt and Truman), I found Donald Kagan's article, "Why America Dropped the Bomb" [September], disheartening—and not simply because it included a bitter attack on my work.

There was a time when thoughtful conservatives were willing to deal with the Hiroshima bombing with a dispassionate respect for the evidence—and, too, a profound concern for the moral and legal issues involved. Indeed, while such liberal publications as the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, and *PM* applauded the atomic bombings, conservatives were among the first to criticize the use of the weapon.

Two days after Hiroshima was attacked, for instance, Herbert Hoover wrote the publisher of *Army and Navy Journal*: "The use of the atomic bomb, with its indiscriminate killing of women and children, revolts my soul." When he and General Douglas MacArthur met privately a few months later, Hoover's diary records MacArthur's agreement that had President Truman followed Hoover's private May 1945 recommendation to clarify the surrender terms, "we would have avoided all of the losses, the atomic bomb, and the entry of Russia into Manchuria."

Similarly, the editor of *Human Events*, Felix Morley, denounced the bombings: "If December 7, 1941, is 'a day that will live in infamy,' what will impartial history say of August 6, 1945?" Throughout the 50's William F. Buckley, Jr.'s *National Review* ran numerous critical articles; a representative 1958 editorial emphasized this question

> that ought to haunt Harry Truman: "was it *really* necessary? Might a mere demonstration of the bomb, followed by an ultimatum, have turned the trick?" If there is a satisfactory answer to that question, the people of Hiroshima and the people of the United States have a right to hear it.

The serious nature of postwar conservative criticism is reported at length in my book, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*—as is the evidence upon which the early conservatives and more recent critics based their arguments. Although Mr. Kagan is extremely free with his charge that I and other historians have neglected certain points of evidence, he simply does not deal with such facts, or—to select only a few items (given space limitations)—the following judgments, some of which are widely known, some of which are newly reported in my book:

• Chief of Staff to the President, Admiral William D. Leahy's strong declaration that "the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender. . . ." (He had reached essentially this conclusion, his diary shows, by June 18, 1945.)

• General Dwight D. Eisenhower's repeated public and private statements that "Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and . . . that [the weapon was] no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. . . ."

• General Curtis E. LeMay's many statements like the following, made publicly on September 20, 1945: "The war would have been over in two weeks

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without the Russians entering and without the atomic bomb. . . . The atomic bomb had nothing to do with the end of the war at all."

Similarly, as is well known, just after the war the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey—guided by another conservative, Paul H. Nitze—judged that "certainly prior to December 31, 1945, and in all probability prior to November 1, 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

From the content of his article it seems highly doubtful that Mr. Kagan has even bothered to read *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*; he thinks it is the "latest version" of my 1965 *Atomic Diplomacy*. But the new book—as numerous reviewers have observed—is very different from the work I published more than 30 years ago on the basis of a 1963 Cambridge University doctoral dissertation.

Atomic Diplomacy was primarily a study of the impact of the atomic bomb on 1945 diplomacy. It dealt only briefly with the question of why the bomb was used—and repeatedly hedged its very tentative conclusions concerning the role of diplomatic factors in the decision with (often ignored) warnings that many questions cannot be fully answered "on the basis of the presently available evidence . . ."; that "no final conclusion can be reached . . ." as yet; and that "more research and more information are needed to reach a conclusive understanding of why the atomic bomb was used."

The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb is a full-scale analysis (780 pages of text and references) of the evidence accumulated in the last 50 years which shows the President was advised there were other ways to end the war without the atomic bomb—and plenty of time to test them between early August and a possible November landing. It also explores in detail how the modern myths surrounding the bomb were created. An Afterword takes up the now-numerous "theories" of why the bomb was used.

Mr. Kagan does not bother to cite (let alone challenge) any of the new information presented in this long text. His quite gratuitous personal attacks on me and on a very old book are hardly fitting in any serious scholarly discussion. Although Barton Bernstein, Martin Sherwin, and I disagree on certain important matters of interpretation, Mr. Kagan's misleading characterization of how such scholars view my work is simply not in accord with their published statements. (See, for example, Bernstein's explicit acknowledgment of my work—and his denunciation of the "questionable enterprise" of Mr. Kagan's principal source, Robert Maddox—in *International Security*, Spring 1991.) Nor does Mr. Kagan seem to know that Sherwin has modified his early argument in recent articles. Mr. Kagan's similarly reckless charge that my earlier book has been "refuted" by these and other writers is challenged by another scholar with far greater credentials in this field, his Yale colleague, the distinguished diplomatic historian Gaddis Smith: "[T]he preponderance of new evidence that has appeared since 1965 tends to sustain the original argument" of *Atomic Diplomacy*.

Even when Mr. Kagan attempts to deal with the documentary record, he is misleading. For instance, I *agree* that determining how many lives might have been lost if an invasion actually had to take place—or might have been "expected" to be lost—is very difficult. *However*, given the evidence that the President was advised that the war could almost certainly be ended by other means *without* an invasion, I have never made the debate over estimates central to my argument.

On the critical issue of whether the President was advised that the bomb was not necessary, Mr. Kagan changes the subject, misstates my position—and then (again) avoids the most important modern evidence. For instance, there is no disagreement that Japanese military leaders "wanted" to continue the war. They definitely did—especially as long as the U.S. demand for "unconditional surrender" threatened the emperor, and, too, especially as long as they could sustain the faint hope that the Russians might stay out of the war.

Moreover, it is not surprising that they held onto their views for a brief time even after these conditions changed. However, they quite quickly abandoned them (and a list of other items they hoped for in a surrender document) after the emperor's intervention—even though they had full power under the Japanese Constitution to resign rather than agree to accept the U.S. terms. (And, of course, the unknown internal August debate over additional items played no part in U.S. July decision-making.)

The central question is not what Japanese leaders did *given the conditions they faced or for a brief moment following the change in conditions*. Nor, contrary to Mr. Kagan, is it solely a matter of the conditions regarding the emperor—as I repeatedly emphasize in my new study. As virtually everyone recognized at the time, the real questions were: what options did President Truman have available to him to alter the context in which Japanese decision-making occurred—and what was he advised would likely happen once the Japanese had adequate time to digest the changes in context?

Mr. Kagan fails to note that U.S. intelligence and other officials advised that when two fundamental conditions facing Japan were changed, the war would likely end in reasonably short order. Again, space permits only a brief sampling of the evidence:

• As early as April 29, 1945, the Joint Intelligence Committee advised: "The entry of the USSR into the war would . . . convince most Japanese *at once* of the inevitability of complete defeat" (emphasis added). This advice was repeated regularly throughout the rest of the spring and summer.

• On July 17, 1945 at the Potsdam conference—

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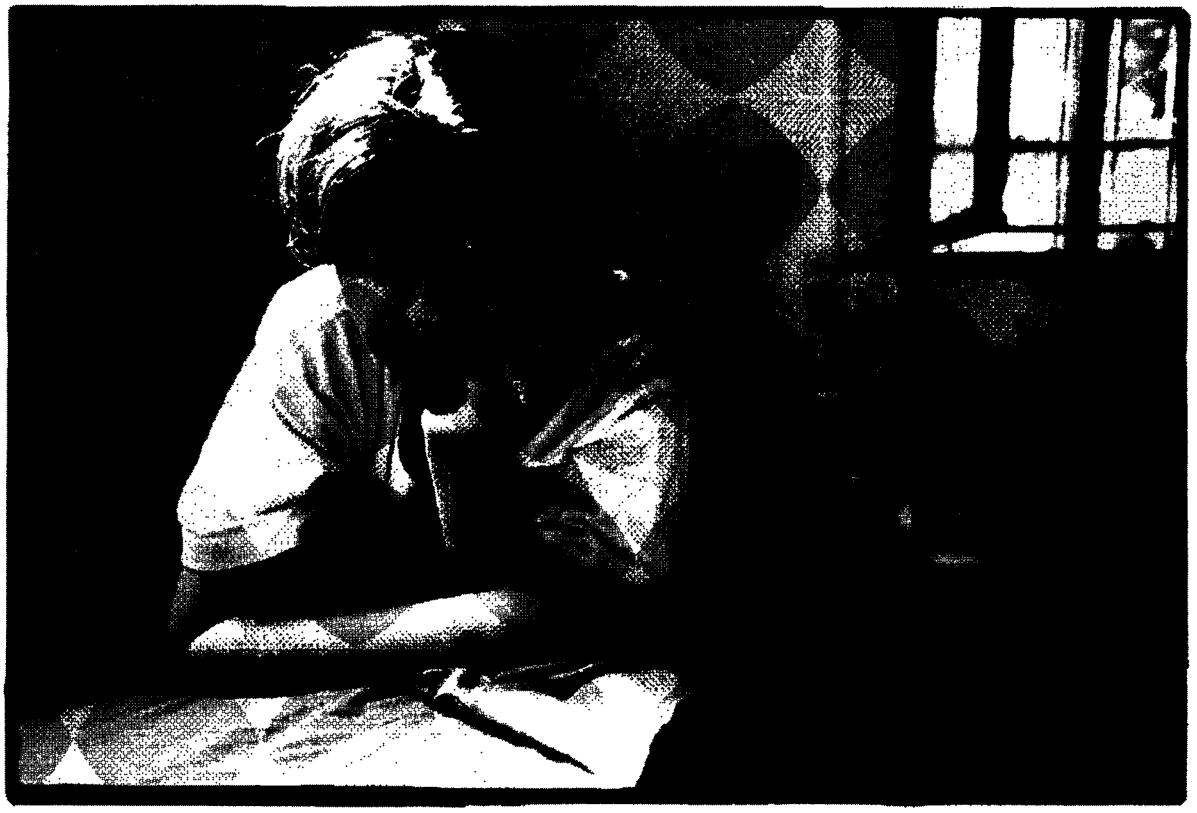

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after hearing that Russia would indeed soon enter the war—President Truman's diary shows him writing: "*Fini* Japs when that comes about."

• The next day, July 18, 1945—in an exuberant letter to his wife Bess—he happily reported: ". . . I've gotten what I came for—Stalin goes to war August 15 with no strings on it. . . ." He then went on to observe: "I'll say that we'll end the war a year sooner now, and think of the kids who won't be killed!"

• Even without assuming the Russian attack, Secretary of War Stimson advised Truman directly on July 2, 1945 that if assurances were given for the emperor, "I think the Japanese nation has the mental intelligence and versatile capacity in such a crisis to recognize the folly of a fight to the finish and to accept the proffer of what will amount to an unconditional surrender. . . ."

• Acting Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew repeatedly argued essentially the same case to Truman. Indeed, as *The Decision* documents at length, contrary to Mr. Kagan, President Truman was advised by every significant official with White House access other than James F. Byrnes to clarify the surrender terms. Contemporary documents also show that the President never expressed any serious political objection to doing so, was not "obdurate" about the matter (to quote from Stimson's diary account), and expressly stated that he thought it a good idea on several occasions.

• On August 3, 1945, the diary of Byrnes's assistant, Walter Brown, records that at a meeting on the way home from Potsdam, the President, Byrnes, and Leahy "agrred [*sic*] Japas [*sic*] looking for peace. (Leahy had another report from Pacific.) President afraid they will sue for peace through Russia instead of some country like Sweden."

• A top-secret 1946 internal War Department study discovered a few years ago concluded that Russia's early August entry into the war ". . . would have been sufficient to convince all responsible leaders that surrender was unavoidable" and that the war would likely have ended about the same time as it did had there been no atomic bomb. The War Department study judged that even an initial November 1945 landing on Kyushu was only a "remote" possibility—and that the full invasion of Japan in the spring of 1946 would not have occurred.

Given adequate space, thoughtful historians can legitimately weigh and debate the import of these and other evidentiary points. However, given what we now know, it simply will not do to continue to avoid important elements of the documentary record—and then offer such bald statements as Mr. Kagan's unqualified claim that "any strategy other than the employment of the atomic weapons would have failed to compel a Japanese surrender short of an invasion of the home islands." Both the importance of the issues involved—and serious scholarship—demand a higher standard.

GAR ALPEROVITZ
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to comment on Donald Kagan's article and raise an issue which I have never seen addressed. By way of background, I was a member of the Manhattan Project and worked at the University of Chicago and at Hanford, Oregon, from early 1944 to early 1945. While at Hanford, I was part of a group that loaded the second uranium pile.

Many of us were told on Day 1 what we would be working on and we were allowed to ask questions. . . . To this day I have seen no published material indicating that the answers we were given at the time were incorrect.

Various arguments have been adduced to justify the dropping of the bomb. I wish to confine myself here to the issue of whether a "demonstration" of the power of the bomb in an uninhabited area would have been more appropriate than using it on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The official position has been that a demonstration was inadvisable because we had only two bombs and could not risk a dud. This argument has several glaring weaknesses. True, prior to the Trinity test at Alamogordo, New Mexico, on July 16, there had been doubts about whether an explosion would occur. But the success of Trinity validated the theoretical and engineering underpinnings of the bomb and should have appreciably reduced concern about the possibility of a dud.

Much more important, however, is the matter of the bomb material: . . . how much was on hand shortly after Trinity and how much more could have been available in the immediate future? The information we had been given indicated that each pile would produce enough plutonium for a number of bombs. Since the reaction of pile No. 1 was completed by the time the second pile was loaded, it was reasonable to infer, again based on the information we had been given, that purified plutonium would be in Los Alamos probably by late spring. I note with satisfaction that this educated guess was confirmed in Richard Rhodes's book, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*. According to Rhodes, "By May 31 enough plutonium had arrived at Los Alamos from Hanford to begin critical mass experiments."

The May 31 date is highly significant since it reveals that assembling a bomb from the "raw" plutonium was a matter of only several weeks. Thus it would appear that all the plutonium generated from pile No. 1 could have been assembled into finished bombs by late August or early September. Moreover, since plutonium from pile No. 2 would have become available for Los Alamos at about the same time, there would have been more than sufficient bomb material on hand to carry out a demonstration. One could even have allowed for one or two duds since all that would have been needed was one successful explosion.

Given the foregoing analysis, the arguments against a demonstration lose their force. An opportunity existed for bringing an end to hostilities without the destruction of two cities and several hundred

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thousand casualties—it was an option we should have exercised. . . .

BYRON H. ARISON
Watchung, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

I usually agree with Donald Kagan but fear that on this occasion he addresses but understates the moral argument against the bombings. They were acts of terrorism and, as such, deplorable. Terrorism in any form is brutal in its violence, indiscriminate in its targets—women, children, babies, the infirm, etc.—and cowardly in the stealth of its delivery against the vulnerable and unsuspecting.

That the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not the only acts of aerial terrorism in World War II does not make them any less abhorrent. That we were following the heinous examples of our enemies does not redeem them. That the revisionist adversaries of the West, who hate our country more than any other, show bad faith in criticizing us for those actions does not make them good. And that our leaders had the cherished lives of fine young men in mind when they made their decision . . . does not obviate the fact that . . . they gave little consideration to the vicious nature of the atom bombing, so alien to the humane traditions of our nation and of our armed forces.

You reap what you sow. Thus we reap a bitter harvest when contemporary terrorists in the IRA, Hamas, etc. extend and justify—to themselves and others—their brutal, indiscriminate, and cowardly assaults by pointing to our example. . . .

No one wants to cast a shadow on the celebration of the victory the valiant men who fought the war richly deserved and stoutly achieved. But surely an occasional acknowledgment of the nature of terrorism by a thoughtful, penetrating scholar like Mr. Kagan might encourage future leaders to consider how to command in a crisis so as to preserve—even in war—our heritage of concern for the innocent and defenseless.

PAUL R. MCHUGH
Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions
Baltimore, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

I read Donald Kagan's very cogent article . . . with great interest. The points he covered were treated in the manner one has come to expect from Mr. Kagan, yet, in common with almost all commentators on the use of atomic weapons against Japan, he failed to consider the viewpoint of America's allies (with the exception, ironically, of the Soviet Union).

This is being written on Sunday, September 3, the 56th anniversary—to the day of the week—of the entry into the war of Britain and members of the British Commonwealth. Some discussions of Truman's decision to use the bomb have referred to the exhaustion of the American people after two-and-one-half years of war. If Americans were tired, how much more exhausted were those who had been fighting for over twice as long: Australians, Britons, Canadians, Indians, New Zealanders, South Africans, not to mention those from continental Europe who had thrown in their lot with Britain? . . .

War in the Pacific did not begin on Sunday, December 7, 1941: in the broadest sense it began when Japanese forces attacked Manchuria in 1930-31. Japanese civilian deaths throughout the war have been estimated at between 300,000 . . . [and] 672,000. Chinese civilian deaths have been reported as . . . up to twenty million, whereas about seven million Soviet civilians died in the war. On average, annual Chinese noncombatant deaths during the fifteen years of the conflict were between 650,000 and 1.2 million. Thus, for every month cut from the duration of the war between 50,000 and 100,000 Chinese civilians were spared.

These facts should give pause to the revisionists who make an issue of racism. Those who accuse American leaders of acting as though the lives of American (Allied?) soldiers were important while those of a few Asian (i.e., Japanese) civilians were not, should ponder the fate of Chinese, Burmese, Filipinos, Malays, *et al.*, tortured and killed by the Japanese occupiers. Would these civilians have criticized, on grounds of racism, the decision to drop atomic bombs to end the death and destruction wreaked by Japanese forces? . . .

PAUL GILMOUR
Tucson, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to COMMENTARY for printing Donald Kagan's incisive article . . . The only amendments that can be made to his argument are ones that strengthen it. Aside from American battle casualties that were prevented by the use of the bomb, thousands of other Allied lives were also saved. As Frederick Bauer and Bruce Lee point out, 300,000 civilian and military prisoners held on Java were saved from massacre only when the emperor intervened, which he did after the bomb was dropped. In addition, the liberation of Malaya was scheduled to begin on September 9, 1945. The beaches selected for the landing were poorly reconnoitered and an invasion would have led to devastating casualties. . . .

Clearly the decision to use the atomic bomb saved far more lives than it took. . . .

STEVEN SCHWAMENFELD
Dundee, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Donald Kagan mentions an often overlooked aspect of the debate about dropping the atomic bomb: saving Japanese lives. The key to understanding the extent of possible Japanese casualties lies in the Okinawa campaign, where 110,000 Japanese died. . . . The two-part invasion of Japan the U.S. was planning . . . would have resulted in far heavier Japanese losses, in all probability exceeding the final death count of 340,000 for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Robert J. Maddox, whom Mr. Kagan acknowledges as a source for much of his data, has recently written that the Japanese had more than two million troops stationed on the home islands, "were train-

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ing millions of irregulars, and had aircraft that might have been used to protect Japanese cities against American bombers" (*American Heritage*, May/June 1995). . . .

Given the high casualty rate for both Americans and Japanese which would have resulted from an invasion, Truman might well have been accused by historians of criminal negligence if he had *failed* to use the bomb.

JOHN C. ZIMMERMAN
University of Nevada
Las Vegas, Nevada

TO THE EDITOR:

. . . In the ideal world, acts are judged against an absolute view of morality. In the real world, however, we usually lack the luxury of being able to make such absolute moral judgments. We have to maintain the perspective to recognize and regret the cost of otherwise bad actions in a good cause. . . .

It is a proper and legitimate part of life in a democracy to ask if Hiroshima and Nagasaki were necessary in order to minimize American, Allied, and even Japanese casualties. Did the chance of saving American lives—forgetting about precise casualty estimates—not only justify but require Truman's decision to drop the bombs? I agree with Donald Kagan, and think the answer is yes, the bombings were necessary and therefore proper. . . .

Another point missing from much of the recent debate but not from Mr. Kagan's article, is that the bombings taught a vivid lesson in the horror of these weapons, and helped prevent nuclear war in the tense years which followed. . . .

BRUCE BRAGER
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

May I add a clarification to Donald Kagan's devastating refutation of the revisionist position on the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? He writes that a Soviet declaration of war on Japan was "scheduled for August 15" and then "hastened by the use of the bomb [was] moved up to August 8." In fact, the Soviets were never firmly committed to declaring war on any specific date. Soviet promises to enter the war, whether at Yalta or Potsdam, were always contingent on reaching agreement with China on Soviet territorial and economic demands in Manchuria. Those negotiations had not been concluded as of August 8.

According to David Holloway's recent book, *Stalin and the Bomb*, Stalin did not issue the order to attack Japan until after Hiroshima. Thus the USSR's hurried decision was plainly an effort to reap a share of the spoils attendant on Japan's imminent surrender, but whether, or when, Soviet forces would have entered the war in the absence of Hiroshima cannot be stated with certainty. . . .

That a Soviet entry into the war would have obviated use of the bomb—a linchpin of revisionist thinking—is sheer speculation, and at odds with the actual chronology of events.

HENRY D. FETTER
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Though I find myself largely in agreement with Donald Kagan, . . . I wonder why all critics, whether they accept Truman's good faith or not, and whether they deem his decision correct or not, seem to be fixated on a "single-motive" explanation for his decision to use the atomic bomb.

Surely we know enough about human decision-

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making even in trivial matters to realize that decisions almost always have more than one motive. Consider, instead, the scenario whereby Truman's primary—call it even overwhelming—consideration was the saving of lives, and . . . not only American lives. But would his decision have been less valid if he and his advisers had at least considered the effects of the atomic explosions on Stalin? After all, the Russian people had unquestionably suffered horrendous hardships and engaged in outstanding heroism during the war, so that even a more humane leader than Stalin might have deemed himself justified in seeking a large portion of Europe (not only Eastern Europe) as compensation. Add to that the centuries-old Russian urge to expand, and one need have been neither paranoid nor a rabid anti-Communist to dread—and therefore to forestall—such demands, which would of course have been backed by a tremendous war machine. Indeed, then and even more so in retrospect, it would have stamped American leadership as either incompetent or downright treasonable if no such considerations had ever entered into the decision to drop the bomb.

HARRY KAUFMANN
Hunter College
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Donald Kagan, in his excellent article, is too kind to ABC's documentary on Hiroshima. . . . He says that the program, in common with other journalistic accounts, offered a "distilled version" of . . . the post-revisionist scholarly consensus that President Truman was mistaken in using the bomb—it was not needed to end the war and its use was immoral. But, still according to Mr. Kagan, this consensus now rejects the earlier revisionist view that we used the bomb not to end the war but to intimidate the Soviet Union. In truth, however, ABC and Peter Jennings, the host and co-writer of the show, did present the earlier revisionist position, one which had developed during the radical . . . 1960's. . . .

In producing a documentary on a controversial topic, a television network has a responsibility to explain to viewers, who have at best a modest knowledge of the matter, the complexity of the issue and report on the diversity of opinions on the subject. But it became clear in the first five minutes of the ABC show that this would be a narrow, highly tendentious presentation. . . . The opening set the tone for the entire program; it was a naked appeal to raw emotion: . . . a montage of President Truman, the *Enola Gay* B-29 that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, and the charred victims of the attack. . . .

Mr. Kagan effectively recounts the true facts about such things as the Japanese unwillingness to surrender and the evidence supporting President Truman's assertion that the bombing would save 500,000 or one million American lives (not mentioned in the show).

I find it absolutely despicable of ABC to join with left-wing historians in smearing Harry Truman's memory. . . . He is no longer with us to defend his actions, but those of us who have life today thanks to him, to the crews who dropped the bombs, and to all the men who made the Manhattan Project a success do have a responsibility to speak out.

SPENCER WARREN
Falls Church, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

Donald Kagan's timely and cogent article raised my blood pressure when I thought of the revisionists, or should I say apologists, who would pan the mountain stream of history for even the tiniest nuggets of fool's gold to support their claim that dropping the atomic bomb was unwarranted.

My father, who was a sailor aboard a destroyer in the Pacific throughout the war with Japan, has spoken many times of the orders he received for the invasion of the Japanese homeland, which was scheduled to begin in the fall and winter of 1945.

This is evidence to me of the task that faced our wartime leaders. They perceived, correctly, that it would take huge numbers of men to end the war and would mean the reassignment of untrained personnel and probably would have involved all able-bodied men available. What responsible leader would not use the atomic bomb to avert, using conservative estimates, several hundred thousand casualties? . . . The only conclusion anyone who had lived through Okinawa, Luzon, Tarawa, etc. could have reached was that the scheduled invasion of Japan was going to turn into a bloodbath of unprecedented proportions. . . .

ALAN S. WEISZ
Deerfield, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to add to the discussion of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki the voice of one with a special memory of those events, a memory that remains clear to this day.

On July 28, 1945, I boarded a U.S. troop ship, the *USS General Aloysius Greeley*, in New York harbor along with 29 army friends and a total of 3,000 troops. My group had been trained as Chinese interpreters, and we were headed, presumably, for the land war in China. As we crossed into the Mediterranean, we learned of the Hiroshima bomb, then of the Russian declaration of war against the Japanese, and finally of the Nagasaki bomb. Of course we had no radio, no newspapers, no commentators to explain any of this to us, but we were certain that it meant the end of the war.

While we were tied up for 24 hours in Port Said, some of the Navy crew who had been on shore liberty came back aboard at midnight on August 8 or 9 and told us they had heard a radio report from New York that the war was over. None of us slept that night. In the morning, we continued south through the Suez Canal. Then, after five days and nights in the Red Sea and two days out into the Arabian Sea, the captain announced that the war was indeed over.

All these years I have felt that the atomic bomb saved my life and the lives of all my friends. None of

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the latter-day reevaluations and rewritings of history has made me change my mind. . . .

HERBERT H. PAPER
Hebrew Union College/ Jewish Institute of Religion Cincinnati, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR:

Fifty years ago, my father, Irving Winkler, was a lieutenant in the U.S. Army stationed on Tinian island in the Northern Marianas, . . . the base from which Lieutenant Colonel Paul Tibbets and the crew of the *Enola Gay* took off.

Many who today question the decision to drop the bomb maintain that we should face the truth of our actions; namely, that Americans are a violent, racist, unjust people. They would also like to wish away a few inconvenient facts. . . .

Let us forget for a moment Lieutenant Winkler and his fellow Americans who might have been killed or injured in the huge conventional invasion of Japan that would have been necessary if we had not dropped the bomb. After all, they were combatants. (Forget also that most members of our armed forces were in a "citizens' army.") But what about the Japanese? What about innocent Japanese citizens who would otherwise have died had we *not* dropped the bomb?

With the speedy end to the war brought about by the bombing, General Douglas MacArthur arrived in Japan as Supreme Commander of the occupation and found many communities threatened with starvation. He issued an order forbidding the consumption of local food supplies by occupation forces, set up Army kitchens to help feed the populace, and immediately imported 3,500,000 tons of food from U.S. Army supplies. He explained his actions to Congress:

> Under the responsibilities of victory, the Japanese people are now our prisoners, no less than did the starving men on Bataan become their prisoners when the peninsula fell. As a consequence of the ill treatment, including starvation, of Allied prisoners in Japanese hands, we have tried and executed the Japanese officers upon proof of responsibility. Can we justify such punitive action if we ourselves, in reversed circumstances but with hostilities at an end, fail to provide the food to sustain life among the Japanese people . . .?

Does this express the attitude of a violent, racist people?

By the end of the war, smallpox was rampant in Japan. The Americans administered smallpox vaccinations to 70 million Japanese in three years, and curbed the disease. . . . Through inoculation and education, typhoid, paratyphoid, cholera, and dysentery were substantially reduced or eradicated. MacArthur wrote in his *Reminiscences* that his medical officers estimated these health measures saved two million lives in the first two years of occupation.

Yet all the facts Mr. Kagan or I can muster are of no use to those whose minds are set on seeing America as evil. . . .

HENRY B. WINKLER
Santa Rosa, California

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article, Donald Kagan quotes Paul Fussell, who was on a Navy ship in August 1945 expecting to take part in an invasion of Japan: "[When we learned of the bomb] we broke down and cried with relief and joy. We were going to live." As a contemporary of Fussell's, I can attest to the accuracy of this statement.

I have never in the subsequent 50 years felt the need to apologize for the unadulterated feeling of relief we experienced on hearing the news. My

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thanks to Mr. Kagan for so effectively explaining the sound basis for our very human reaction.

DAVID E. GOLAY
Waldport, Oregon

TO THE EDITOR:

I wish to commend Donald Kagan for his excellent and informative article. I particularly enjoyed his in-depth analysis, since I had been appalled and outraged at the distorted views expounded by the news media in late July and early August. . . . All of this second-guessing some 50 years later . . . left me with a sense of despair and revulsion. . . .

NATHANIEL H. GOLDMAN
Columbus, Ohio

DONALD KAGAN writes:

The essence of Gar Alperovitz's complaint is that I did not take account of statements by American officials that using the bomb was unnecessary and/or wicked. This is not a new argument, and Robert J. Maddox has taken it on directly and in detail in his new book, *Weapons for Victory. Pace* Mr. Alperovitz's assertion, Maddox, a professor of history at Pennsylvania State University, is a highly respected scholar who was one of the first to raise objections to excesses of American cold-war revisionism. It is easier to cast aspersions on his reputation than to meet his arguments.

From Maddox we learn that the statements by Leahy, Eisenhower, and LeMay that Mr. Alperovitz cites in his letter were all made after the fact. The Leahy quotation is taken from his memoirs, published in 1950. Whatever Leahy might have said in his diary, Maddox denies there is evidence that he expressed such views before the bomb was used. As an advocate of the Navy's role, Leahy argued for a continuation of the siege of Japan, but he did not claim it would bring a surrender before the scheduled invasion of Kyushu in November. To be sure, Leahy was a longstanding enemy of the bomb who had insisted it would not work. Even after Hiroshima, Truman remarked that "the admiral [Leahy] said up to the last that it wouldn't go off." There is no contemporary record, however, of Leahy telling the President that an invasion of Japan could have been avoided without resort to the bomb.

Eisenhower's remarks, too, were made several years after the event. But he also came to insist that in a meeting with Stimson before the bomb was dropped, he had opposed its use. Once again, Maddox's detailed examination of the evidence shows no independent corroboration that Eisenhower told Stimson he was against using the bomb. But more important, as Maddox points out, is the fact that

> even if the general had expressed disapproval at this meeting, Truman could not have learned of it because Stimson left [Europe] for the United States later that day. He did not see the President again until after the first bomb had been dropped.

General LeMay's comment was also made only well after the decision to drop the bomb had been taken. LeMay had always believed that conventional strategic bombing could win the war, so his claim that the new superweapon was unnecessary is not surprising. But there is no record of his having told this to Truman before the bomb was dropped.

From his research, Maddox concludes:

> There is no reliable evidence that *any* high-ranking officer expressed moral objections about the bomb to Truman or gave him reason to believe that the military situation had changed appreciably—except that the Japanese defenses were daily growing more formidable—since he had approved the Kyushu operation during his meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on June 18.

Opinions after the fact, even by such wise men as Paul Nitze, are not to the point. There is no reason to believe that they had a better understanding of the problem at the time than the President and his advisers did, and they also did not share his responsibility. Eisenhower in 1948 had the grace to admit that "My views were merely personal and subjective; they were not based on any analysis of the subject." The men who did have the responsibility for ending the Pacific war, as I made clear in my article, expected that they would have to invade Japan even after the atomic bomb and the Soviet Union's entry into the war. They had information about Japanese internal affairs and military movements not available to others, and what they knew made them fear the most determined Japanese resistance, regardless of its apparent hopelessness.

Stimson, morally alert to the issues, nevertheless helped select the target for the bomb, hoping that its use would provide the psychological shock that would make the Japanese accept defeat before an invasion was necessary. George C. Marshall, General of the Army, did not believe anything short of an invasion would do the trick, and even after both bombs had exploded and the Soviets had entered the war, considered using atomic bombs as tactical weapons to aid the invasion. The Navy's chief of staff, Admiral Ernest King, the Air Force chief, General "Hap" Arnold, and his representative, General Ira Eaker, all had the same expectations. There is no evidence that they opposed the use of the bomb. As for LeMay, he claimed that conventional bombing would drive the Japanese back into the stone age and destroy Japanese morale before the invasion date; but Marshall remembered hearing the same things about the air war in Germany and was not impressed.

The highest American commanders in the Pacific, Admiral Chester Nimitz and General Douglas MacArthur, supported both the invasion and the use of the bomb. Nimitz knew of the bomb well in advance. MacArthur learned of it only on August 1, 1945. In Maddox's account, he

> responded with an hour-long lecture on the future of atomic warfare, not with any criticism of existing plans. He continued to urge that preparations for the invasion go forward even after the first bomb was dropped.

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Mr. Alperovitz continues to cite the opinions of U.S. officials that the entry of the Soviets into the war would have made an invasion unnecessary even as he continues to ignore the overwhelming Japanese evidence to the contrary. After my article was published, I received a communication from Sadao Asada, professor of international history at Doshisha University in Kyoto, which included an essay in English, not yet published, called "The Shock of the Atomic Bomb and Japan's Decision to Surrender."

In this essay, Asada demonstrates that the shock effect of the bomb was what enabled the peace faction in Tokyo to force a surrender on those who were determined to carry on the war. The contemporary evidence I cited in my article makes the same point, and it is now reinforced by the postwar recollections of Japanese leaders Asada has assembled. For example, Kido Koichi, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and the man closest to Emperor Hirohito, recalls that, with the bombing, he and the emperor felt that

> the psychological moment we had long waited for had finally arrived to resolutely carry out the termination of the war. . . . There is no doubt that the military leaders were overwhelmed by the enemy's scientific prowess. We felt that if we took the occasion and utilized the *psychological shock* [emphasis added] of the bomb to carry through, we might perhaps succeed in ending the war. . . . It might be said that we of the peace party were assisted by the atomic bomb in our endeavor to end the war.

Asada addresses the question of how important the USSR's joining the war was to the Japanese. He quotes Kido as follows: "I believe that with the atomic bomb alone we could have brought the war to an end. But the Soviet entry into the war made it much easier." On the other hand, Sakomizu Hisatsune, chief cabinet secretary, is quoted as saying: "I am sure we could have ended the war in a similar way if the Russian declaration of war had not taken place at all."

Hisatsune's opinion is supported by the fact that, unlike the bomb, Russian entry was no surprise and had already been discounted by Japanese military leaders. At the time it occurred, General Anami, the army minister, said: "The inevitable has come at last." Also at the time, Kawabe Torashiro, vice chief of the general staff, noted: "We have long worried about the question of Soviet entry, but a surprise attack with this new weapon was beyond our wildest dreams." And the diary of Oki Misao, chief secretary of the Japanese House of Representatives, contains this entry: "There is nothing we can do about the appearance of the atomic bomb. That nullifies everything. All our efforts until now have come to naught."

In light of all this, Asada asserts that "if there had been no bomb and only the Soviet entry into the war, Japan would not have surrendered when it did."

Yet even after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet invasion, influential members of the Japanese military would not accept defeat. Rather than having to face the disgrace of surrender, they planned a coup that would have permitted continued resistance. As General Anami put it, "The appearance of the atomic bomb does not spell the end of the war. We are confident about the decisive battle in the homeland against American forces." And this attitude did not represent merely the feelings of such people during what Mr. Alperovitz calls "the brief moment follow-

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ing the change in conditions." Since he pays so little attention to Japanese evidence, I do not know how he knows what "would likely happen once the Japanese had adequate time to digest the changes in context."

Asada, for his part, believes that the Japanese peace faction feared a coup by young army officers, like the one that had been staged in 1936, if the government had tried to surrender; this view is shared by Kido.

A successful coup would surely have meant continued Japanese resistance and forced an invasion. High Japanese officials in 1945 and since have believed that the bomb prevented such a coup and allowed the war to end without an invasion.

Asada also points out the irrelevance of the claim that Japan was already defeated in August 1945, making the use of the atomic bomb unnecessary. Such arguments, he says, "confuse 'defeat' with 'surrender': 'defeat' is a military reality, whereas 'surrender' is a matter of political decision-making." Without the bomb, the political conditions for surrender would not have existed, the war would have continued, and the invasion would have occurred.

Assessing all the evidence, Asada concludes that "the atomic bomb did indeed prompt Japan's decision to surrender." Consequently, "Japan's surrender on August 15, averted an apocalyptic battle with unprecedented carnage that would have rendered Hiroshima and Nagasaki mere footnotes in history."

I am sorry Mr. Alperovitz thinks I attacked him personally. Readers will look in vain in my article for anything beyond challenges to his arguments. His "very old book," whose central point is that the bomb was used primarily to cow and influence the Soviet Union, not to bring the war to a swifter end, has since been battered by revisionists and others, but he has never backed away from this thesis. It was cited approvingly, with quotations from others and restated in his own voice, in his article in *Foreign Policy* which appeared as recently as the summer of 1995. If he is now embarrassed by it, he should publicly renounce it.

I thank Byron H. Arison for his interesting information about the availability of material for making more bombs in 1945. The argument against making a demonstration explosion in an unpopulated area was not merely that one of the two extant bombs might be a dud and could not be readily replaced. The question was discussed in May 1945 in the scientific advisory panel to the interim committee that had been established to advise on future atomic policy. Here is an account of the commission's deliberations by Arthur Compton, one of the panel members:

> For perhaps ten minutes, the proposition was the subject of general discussion. [J. Robert] Oppenheimer could think of no demonstration sufficiently spectacular to convince the Japanese that further resistance was futile. Other objections came to mind. The bomb might be a dud. The Japanese might shoot down the delivery plane or bring American prisoners into the test area. If the demonstration failed to bring surrender, the chance of administering the maximum surprise shock would be lost. Besides, would the bomb cause any greater loss of life than the fire raids that had burned out Tokyo?

There were clearly difficulties in staging an effective demonstration. Leo Szilard, its most vigorous proponent at the time, saw this years later:

> I think it is clear that you can't demonstrate a bomb over an uninhabited island. You have to demolish a city. So a demonstration would have meant approaching Japan through a diplomatic channel, proposing a demonstration, say, over, Hiroshima with the inhabitants removed from Hiroshima.

I agree with Paul R. McHugh that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were terrible acts against unarmed civilians which should be avoided whenever possible. So was the fire-bombing of Tokyo and all the bombings of cities during the war. Unfortunately, condemning such acts will not stop them. As Thucydides, who reported many horrible atrocities against civilians himself, said some 25 centuries ago, "War is a violent teacher." The longer it grinds on, the more violent and brutal it becomes. Sometimes it compels the combatants to choose one horrible act in order to avoid others that are worse. The only practical response is to work intelligently and conscientiously to prevent war.

I thank Paul Gilmour, Steven Schwamenfeld, John C. Zimmerman, Bruce Brager, Henry D. Fetter, Harry Kaufmann, Spencer Warren, Alan S. Weisz, Herbert H. Paper, Henry B. Winkler, David E. Golay, and Nathaniel H. Goldman for their valuable comments.

The New Federalism

TO THE EDITOR:

Although I found Wilfred M. McClay's article on federalism ["A More Perfect Union?," September] both fascinating and largely on point, I also found a suggestion of his quite troubling. In referring to recent Supreme Court decisions, he writes that it cannot

> carry much weight for opponents [of the conservative faction] on the Court to protest, as Justices Stephen Breyer and David Souter have done in the wake of the *United States* v. *Lopez*, that the present Court is acting in dangerously unrestrained ways, unsettling issues thought to have been settled. *After all, unsettlement was what the 1994 elections were all about.* [Emphasis added]

I take that last sentence to mean that the country's overwhelmingly conservative vote last November somehow justifies those decisions of the Supreme Court that conservatives find politically satisfying. Yet for more than three decades now, it has been conservatives who have

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maintained that the Court grossly abuses its power whenever it pays heed to the prevailing political winds under the guise of interpreting the Constitution; that is, when those winds are blowing toward the Left. . . .

In *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania* v. *Casey* (1992), the three-Justice plurality which helped to uphold *Roe* v. *Wade* said that the Court is "invested with the authority to decide [the nation's] constitutional cases and speak before all others for their constitutional ideals." Lofty though this may sound, it is a gross perversion of what the role of the Court really is, as Justice Antonin Scalia pointed out in his dissenting opinion.

Scalia, the most "conservative" Justice, himself holds the view that there is an impenetrable wall separating the Supreme Court from public-opinion polls. Rather than reading the daily editorials—be they liberal or conservative—it is the Court's job to decide cases based on what the words of the Constitution meant to those who wrote and ratified them, and to the people of their day—not to decide what you, or I, or the next person *wishes* those words would mean. The notion that the Court must not "turn back the clock" in making its decisions is as false as it is emotionally appealing. Rather, turning back the clock is exactly what the Court is supposed to do.

It should be pointed out that the Court itself is much to blame for the fact that most Americans today view it as little more than another legislative body existing to serve their will and "do justice." As even liberal scholars are forced to concede, the Court, beginning primarily in the mid-50's and early 60's, made dozens upon dozens of intellectually vacant decisions in the name of achieving political goals, often according to such vague notions as "evolving standards of decency." . . .

If the Constitution were meant to be interpreted according to majority will, as those three Justices in *Casey* seemed to claim, it would hardly be necessary to have it in the first place. Instead, its purpose is to preserve certain values *against* majority rule, particularly those which the Framers thought could be easily eroded, whether those values encompass individual rights or simply that the President must be thirty-five years old.

Therefore, intellectually honest conservatives and liberals alike should applaud the Court when it interprets the Constitution correctly but not when it serves one political faction over another. . . .

TODD BANK
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

I commend Wilfred M. McClay for writing, and COMMENTARY for publishing, "A More Perfect Union?" Mr. McClay's insight is equaled by the timeliness of his subject: a better political atmosphere in which Americans might reacquaint themselves with the Founders' idea of federalism has not presented itself in several decades. In his disinterested manner, Mr. McClay has done a masterful job. . . .

There is one passage, however, that does not seem to fit with the rest of the article. Mr. McClay acknowledges that "the electorate's generalized disgust with its national government" has brought about an attitude of "change," and he continues:

> Even more important is the potential for substantive change promised by some of the recent actions of the Supreme Court. . . . [A] narrow majority of the Court's current members appears willing, and in some cases eager, to

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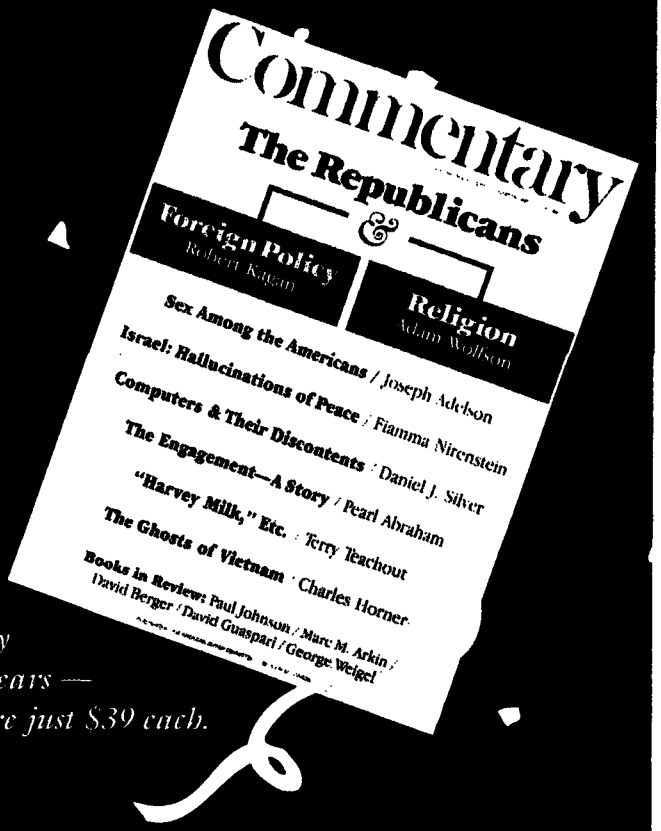
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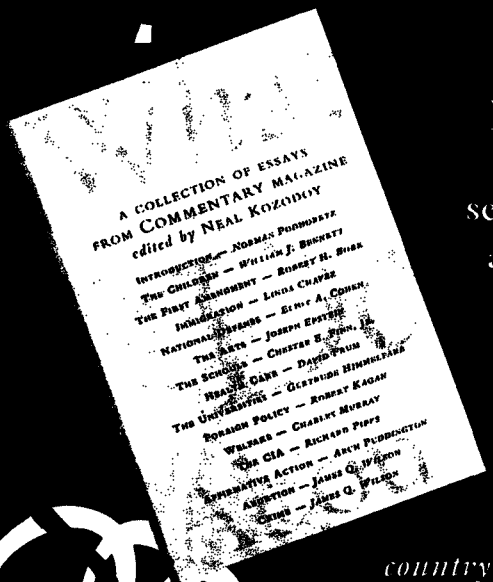

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revisit or overturn decisions and precedents that have disabled federalism in the past. Such leadership is of crucial importance: as *the final arbiter of the Constitution's meaning*, the Court has it in its power to revive a framework of constitutional protections that could make a thriving federalism possible once again. [Emphasis added]

I would argue, however, that the Supreme Court was not at the Founding nor is it today the "final arbiter" of the Constitution; the "people," as *givers* of the Constitution, claim that distinction. . . . By virtue of the Revolution and the Declaration of Independence, sovereign power was detached from the state and assumed by the people. True, through ignorance, misunderstanding, and downright apathy, we have allowed this fundamental aspect of self-governance to fade and nearly die. . . .

But it is not the Supreme Court that is turning the political sphere around; far from it. . . . *Lopez* and similar decisions are indeed welcome, but rather than paving the way to a revival of federalism, they are the result of a new spirit of federalism exhibited by the electorate, the people.

Mr. McClay is uncertain of the ability, the worthiness one might say, of Americans to shoulder the responsibility a federal system implies, and in this vein his thinking is consistent with that of the Founders themselves, who on occasion referred to the multitude of the people as "the herd." There is always doubt, but at no time in history has "the herd" been better prepared for, and more adept at, political thought and political action.

A new federalism *is* in the making. The more recent version, like its older counterpart, must be considered experimental, and I agree that a good deal of caution must be exercised in implementing it. One thing seems certain, however: "Leviathan" is on the run. . . . The new federalists, fortified as they are with the practical knowledge of their forebears and a bit of their own lately acquired common sense, . . . may truly achieve the essential but elusive goal the Framers reached toward more than 200 years ago, that of "a more perfect Union," a federal republic—in Benjamin Franklin's words, "A republic, if you can keep it."

JOHN P. BRIDGE
Katy, Texas

TO THE EDITOR:

Wilfred M. McClay should be applauded for alerting us to the need to return our centralized government to its constitutionally enumerated powers. From his analysis . . . one might conclude that he has presented the case for opposition to the unbridled growth and invasive thrust of government. Many readers might even criticize his views as being too conservative. But this is hardly the case. It is not just that government has become too large, or has violated some of its principles. Rather, the federal government has fundamentally reversed the purpose of the Constitution. By abridging the unalienable rights of the individual, curtailing liberty through endless regulations and involuntary redistributions of wealth, it has made a mockery of the principles upon which our Founding Fathers formulated the Constitution. . . .

Mr. McClay's own beliefs embody the notion of what he calls the "national idea," i.e., statism. Thus, for him, the primary issue is the need for the states, localities, and citizenry to be more involved in political life rather than for government to be less involved in people's lives. This is an expression of the statist vision that people exist for the sake of the community rather than the other way around.

Next, he accepts the notion that enlarged government arose out of the desire to address real problems. . . . This reflects the statist view that government solves problems rather than restricts aggression so that people can solve their own problems. . . .

Mr. McClay states that those of us who seek drastic curtailment of government are anarchists who just want devolution. This misses the point: the issue is not a matter of size but of purpose. I for one believe that the U.S. has not been sufficiently militant in its prosecution of fascism, Communism, terrorism, or crime. In those rare cases where government engages in its purpose of defending against aggression, there is no problem.

The issue is not that people should be more responsible in local government but that the influence of government in their lives should be removed. This will not happen, however, until the true purpose of American government and the principles that should guide it are addressed.

ALLEN WEINGARTEN
Morristown, New Jersey

WILFRED M. MCCLAY writes:

I agree with much of what Todd Bank has to say about the interpretive asceticism that judges ought to practice; and I certainly would never endorse any political position that simply discarded precedents and constitutional restraints, submitting all matters to plebiscite or public-opinion poll. I am most uncomfortable, for example, with the cavalier readiness with which many liberals and conservatives propose amending the Constitution. But the mere observance of *stare decisis* will not serve to restore fundamental constitutional principles, when "settled issues" have been settled poorly or wrongly. There is, therefore, a case to be made for Supreme Court action in selective areas that involve the restoration of fundamental constitutional principles.

One should, however, acknowledge that there is something paradoxical in the aims of the current conservative insurgency: Congress, the Court, and perhaps eventually the President are committed to act vigorously in order to *diminish* their own power in the end. There may be natural limits upon how far such action can be expected to go. Hence the importance of enunciating clear and principled positions rather than politically expedient ones. (Hence, also, the importance of

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continued pressure from the public upon the political class.)

In answering John P. Bridge, I would point out that an arbiter is "one chosen or appointed to judge or decide a dispute." The Supreme Court was clearly meant to play such a role in the constitutional structure (see *Federalist* 22). I would also remind him of the Framers' profound suspicion of popular democracy. He is, of course, right in a deeper sense, for the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence both point to the sovereignty of the people as the ultimate source of legitimacy and authority in American political institutions. But in practice, "the people" do not (and, I would argue, cannot) actually deliberate, but instead render an ultimate "Yes" or "No" to propositions formulated by others.

One could argue that the 1994 elections represented a crude but resounding "No" to the kind of jurisprudence we have been getting, which has consistently sought to circumvent representative institutions. But only time will tell whether the people will say "Yes" to the alternatives with which they are now being presented. Again, a lot will depend upon how the Court approaches that task.

As for the perspective of Allen Weingarten, I think that, like most libertarianism, it represents a partial truth which is undermined when overstressed. There is, and should be, a tension between self and society, individual and polity. But to say that the only alternatives open to us are "the statist vision that people exist for the sake of the community" and the libertarian contention that the truth is "the other way around" is to set up a false opposition. The libertarian conception of the self as autonomous and self-determining, and of all forces of normative social order as mere forms of coercion, simply cannot withstand close examination.

The importance of the revival of classical political thought in our time, and in my own defense of federalism, is in offering a view of political and social life that mediates between the "modern" extremes of libertarianism and statism (or extreme communitarianism). When Aristotle declared that man is by nature a political animal, he was pointing to the fact that association with others, especially in and through acts of citizenship, is an essential element in our formation and growth, the precondition of our being free agents or selves at all.

That the Founders and Framers saw the dangers of a too-powerful government, at whatever level, is certainly true. But to argue, as Mr. Weingarten does, that "the influence of government should be removed," is equally contrary to "the principles upon which our Founding Fathers formulated the Constitution." As James Madison famously expressed it, in *Federalist* 51: "But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature?" Our Constitution is itself just such a reflection; and its view of human nature is not a libertarian one.

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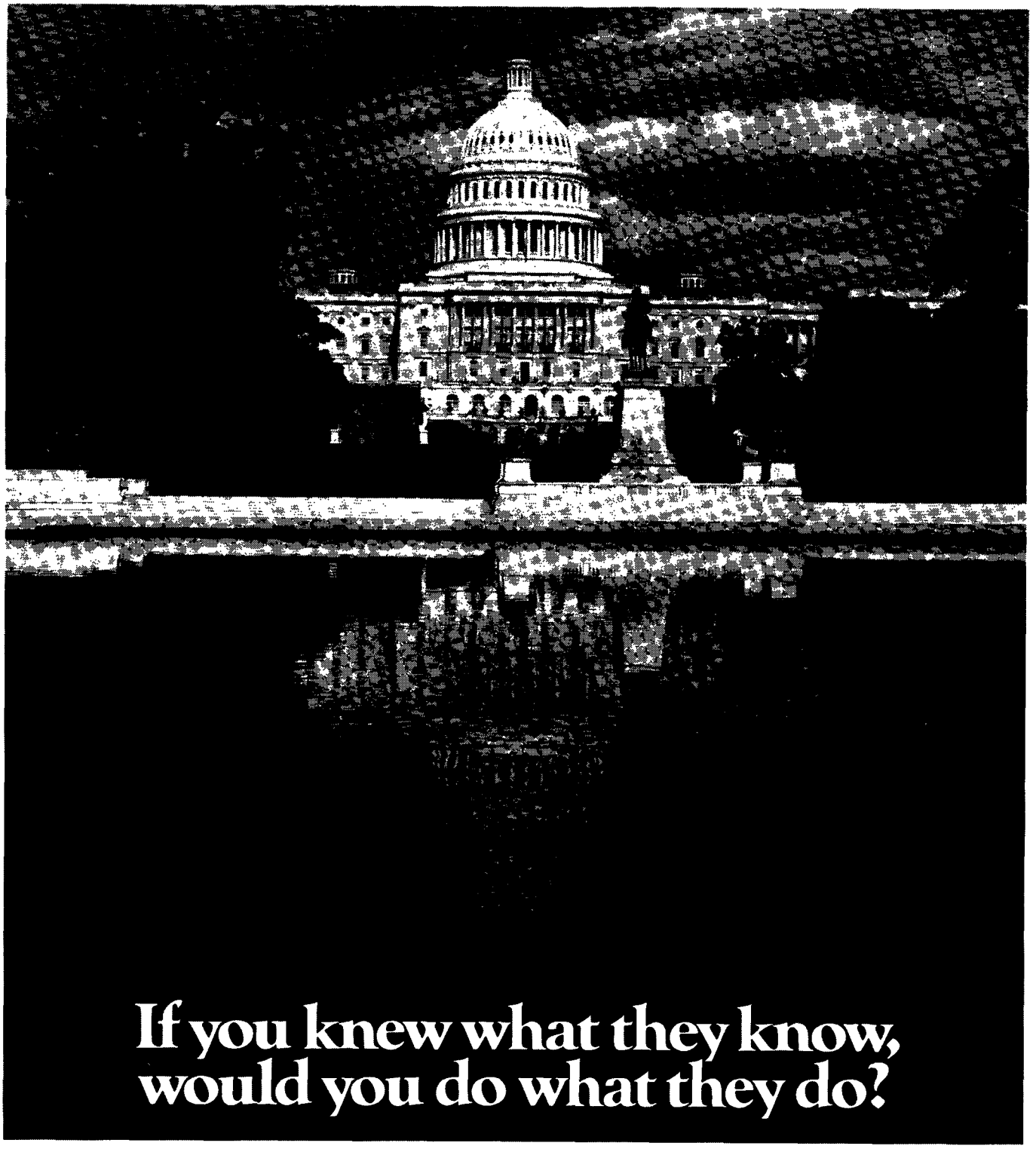

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Commentary
December 1995

Speaking of Race

Arch Puddington

In the aftermath of the O.J. Simpson verdict and the mass rally of black men in Washington, D.C.—the so-called Million Man March—many Americans have voiced fears that we have entered a crisis-level breakdown in race relations. In a speech delivered in Austin, Texas the same day as the march, President Clinton spoke of a racial gulf that is "tearing at the heart of America." On the day following the rally, Congressman Charles Schumer, a Brooklyn Democrat, expressed "fear for the future of the country," and joined a bipartisan group calling for a presidential commission similar to the Kerner Commission established in response to the urban riots of the 1960's.

Nor is worry limited to liberal Democrats. Charles Krauthammer, a writer who has been pointedly critical of race-based social policy, was sufficiently upset by the deterioration in the racial atmosphere to propose that conservatives consider supporting a presidential bid by General Colin Powell, even if this meant putting off goals like welfare reform and the rollback of affirmative action—on the grounds that Powell is the one potential candidate capable of healing America's racial wounds.

While evidence of a worsening racial climate has been building for some time, the perception of a mounting crisis was triggered principally by the Simpson acquittal. Or, to be more precise, by the black reaction to the verdict. The image of black workers, black teachers, black lawyers, black students, even black women who had taken refuge in battered-women's shelters cheering the jury's decision with an elation ordinarily reserved for winning athletic teams provoked among whites a response in which outrage commingled with utter bewilderment. Black America, it seemed, had set aside issues of guilt and innocence, not to mention basic morality, to exult in racial vengefulness.

Especially disconcerting was the attitude of some black intellectuals who hailed the verdict while acknowledging the probability that Simpson had in fact murdered his ex-wife, Nicole, and her friend, Ron Goldman. A typical example was a commentary in the *Washington Post* by Paul Butler, a professor of law at George Washington University whose credentials include a stint as a federal prosecutor during the Bush administration.

Butler reports that he forced himself to remain silent on the afternoon the verdict was announced, but at night, at home, he "danced my freedom dance, along with my sisters and brothers all over the world." Then Butler proceeds to defend, or, more accurately, to recommend, the practice of "jury nullification" in criminal cases where black defendants are charged with nonviolent offenses. Under this concept, defense attorneys encourage jurors to ignore the law and the facts in a case and

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reach a verdict based on group solidarity: in other words, they play the race card. Butler, who has expanded on this argument in an article for the *Yale Law Review*, contends that jury nullification is "morally as well as legally right," asserts that "African-Americans live in a police state" similar to the East European countries under Communism, and proposes that black defendants in drug cases be set free *en masse*.

The idea that juries should disregard wholly unjust laws has a historic place in the Anglo-American legal tradition, but what is now referred to as jury nullification was once also properly considered a shameful blot on the American judicial system when it was deployed by white jurors in the segregationist South (giving rise to the phrase, "Southern justice"). Among the more important changes ushered in by the early civil-rights revolution were, precisely, policies aimed at curbing racism and race consciousness in the courtroom. But in recent years, defense attorneys like Alton Maddox and the late William Kunstler have appealed to the racial instincts of minority jurors in a series of high-profile criminal cases, and occasionally have won acquittals or hung juries despite strong evidence of their clients' guilt. Now it appears that a desperation tactic of radical lawyers is to be elevated to the status of legal doctrine, and "Southern justice" is being revived in reverse.

Similarly, 25 years ago, assertions that black Americans live under a semi-fascist police state were the exclusive property of fringe radicals like the Black Panthers (and their liberal cheerleaders). In the current environment, the same arguments are advanced by law professors, members of Congress, and, if we are to believe journalistic accounts, black corporate executives. Whether or not we are experiencing a "crisis," it is obvious that something is seriously amiss when the most successful members of the black community appear so thoroughly alienated from the larger society.

THE PRINCIPAL aim of American racial policy has been to create a large class of college-educated, middle-class black professionals who would feel comfortable in an integrated setting and at home with the virtues of the American system. This ambitious agenda has, in fact, been more than partially fulfilled. Where blacks were once restricted to the lower rungs of the economy and excluded from the corporate world, today most professions and large corporations are highly integrated, and most black families have joined what is roughly regarded as the middle class.

What then accounts for the disconsolate state of the best and brightest of black America? Some point to the instances of petty and not-so-petty harassment and insult which black men suffer daily at the hands of policemen, cab drivers, and shop owners; others, to continuing residential discrimination; still others, more broadly, to the prospect of an end to affirmative action.

As to the first, there is, unfortunately, no solution to the dilemma of daily suspicion until young black men commit fewer violent crimes; even blacks themselves admit that to regard young black men warily can be a matter of common sense, not bigotry. Housing discrimination is another matter. Unlike most immigrant groups, which over a few generations disperse throughout different neighborhoods and regions, blacks have remained concentrated in racial enclaves. This is partially due to black preferences, but discrimination, or even the expectation of white resistance, is certainly a factor in the continuing pattern of separate housing.

But much more critical than either of these matters is the current fracas over affirmative action—a case, if there ever was one, of chickens coming home to roost. This vast system of racial preferences, the creation of generations of liberal policy-makers and presidential administrations, both Democratic and Republican, has in fact done more to foster race consciousness in America than any single event or set of events one can possibly think of. Thanks to affirmative action, we have all been taught to count by race, and the current "crisis" in race relations is, from this perspective, but the culmination of decades of consciously implemented policy. The ultimate professed goal of that policy may have been an integrated society, but its all too predictable effects from the very beginning have been divisiveness, resentment, and polarization.

Now that sentiment is gathering in Congress and in the country at large to eliminate racial preferences, supporters of affirmative action, notably the civil-rights leadership and its liberal friends and allies, have become more insistent than ever on its propriety, and more implacably determined to impose its regime in the workplace, in the schools (where it is also known as multiculturalism), in the electoral process, and, as we see in the push for jury nullification, in the criminal-justice system. But the controversy over this policy has also begun to take on a more public form than in the past, and some of what has emerged is not pretty.

The stress on racial differences—the heart of the case for affirmative action—has of necessity brought to the fore the painful issue of black com-

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petence. Thus, during the debate over admission quotas in the California university system, the fact was widely publicized that black students at Berkeley score on average 300 points lower on admission tests than whites and Asians; newspaper articles report hundreds of whites with higher scores being passed over for hiring or promotion in order to fulfill race quotas in municipal police and fire departments; and so forth. Indeed, every time the Supreme Court ponders a case involving minority set-asides, or Congress votes on a preference program, or a Board of Regents considers the elimination of university-admission quotas, or a white parent takes legal action when his child is denied admission to a prestigious school for reasons of racial balance, it is as if a small referendum were being held on the qualifications of the entire black population of the United States.

This is unfortunate, but it was also inevitable. After all, as the black economist Glenn C. Loury has acutely remarked, those now casting a critical eye on black performance are only availing themselves of the vocabulary of racial groupings "previously anointed by the advocates of social equity." In Loury's words, the critics "are saying, in effect, 'Counting by race wasn't our idea; but since you've raised the subject, let's look at *all* of the numbers.'" Loury has in mind here principally *The Bell Curve*, a study of intelligence and genetics by Charles Murray and the late Richard J. Herrnstein. But his point has much broader applicability: counting by race (the title, incidentally, of an early and prescient book on affirmative action by William J. Bennett and Terry Eastland) has brought us to this sorry pass—and worse.

IN HIS speech in Austin, President Clinton called for a "frank and brutally honest" discussion of racial matters. When it comes to affirmative action—a policy, as its critics rightly complain, that was conceived and implemented at the executive level of the federal government with little opportunity for public debate—this might be a good idea. For one of affirmative action's most corrosive side-effects has been to oblige everyone involved in it to participate in a massive denial of how exactly it works and what its consequences have been. Even in today's more open climate, those who break silence about these consequences are liable to find themselves excoriated in polite society.

So at any rate learned Dinesh D'Souza, the author of a controversial new study of American race relations. A young writer of conservative leanings, D'Souza is also the author of an earlier study of campus multiculturalism, *Illiberal Education*—a work which, despite its polemical tone, received a measure of critical respect. By contrast, *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society** has been greeted by almost uniformly hostile reviews, some of them scathing. Writing in *Time*, Jack E. White dubbed *The End of Racism* "one of the creepiest books in recent years." In the *Washington Post Book World*, David Nicholson called it "maddening . . . in some places unspeakably vile." Other reviewers, perhaps in unconscious tribute to D'Souza's ability to persuade, have fretted over the book's impact; thus, Sean Wilentz warned *New Yorker* readers against D'Souza's "potentially destructive" influence, and against the "ominous" policy implications of the book's thesis.

Ironically, D'Souza's policy recommendations are among the book's weakest features; this is particularly the case with his central proposal that America jettison not only racial preferences but also the basic antidiscrimination protections encoded in the 1964 Civil Rights Act. D'Souza contends that under current law, black business owners are prevented, in theory at least, from drawing their workforce from within the black community—prevented, that is, from discriminating in favor of their own race. But thousands of immigrant entrepreneurs hire more or less exclusively from within their own group, without drawing the attention of the Justice Department.

A more serious problem in *The End of Racism* is its tone of unrelenting negativism toward black America. Page after page is filled with anecdotes, quotations, and statistics which reinforce a message of abject racial failure: failure to compete in the workplace, failure in the schools, failure of community, of culture, of civilization. The recitation is so pitiless and harsh, and so devoid of qualification, as to be at odds with D'Souza's stated and patently sincere belief in the future of America as a multiracial society.

Most regrettably, D'Souza's provocations have allowed his critics to ignore his telling indictment of black political and intellectual leaders. His main point—that the contemporary civil-rights agenda is predicated on a false myth of pervasive white racism—has been made by others (including some of his critics), but seldom with such directness or thoroughness. D'Souza offers up numerous examples to help demonstrate that as America has grown less prejudiced, civil-rights activists have become ever more obsessed with racism as the ex-

*Free Press, 724 pp., $30.

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planation for continued inequality, and ever more wedded to the expansion of government-enforced, race-conscious social policies. That these policies have not alleviated but, on the contrary, served to reinforce the dysfunctional elements in black life is a bitter and lastingly injurious legacy.

D'Souza's argument leads to the conclusion that the most formidable obstacle to reform in American racial policy is black America's dependence on government in general, and on affirmative action in particular. Poor blacks rely on government welfare; working-class blacks are disproportionately likely to look to the government for jobs; black students frequently enter college through admission quotas; black professionals are often reliant on racial preferences; black businessmen see government set-asides as essential to the success of their enterprises; politically minded blacks often seek careers in the flourishing race industry of diversity consultants, civil-rights lobbyists, and race-enforcement bureaucrats. These last D'Souza dubs the "race merchants"—the black political leaders with a stake of their own in the continued perception of white America as incorrigibly racist, and in the continued existence of a black underclass that will corroborate that perception. Such people can be expected to oppose not only shifts in policy, but any change in how America defines and talks about race.

Like *The Bell Curve* before it, *The End of Racism* has been attacked, as I noted above, for injecting an ugly tone into the racial debate—by which is meant ugliness on the part of whites. (D'Souza, in fact, is an immigrant from India.) It is true that recent critics of affirmative action have been considerably more straightforward and unapologetic than has hitherto been the norm in such discussions, and that in D'Souza's case a line is recklessly crossed. But to ascribe works like *The Bell Curve* and *The End of Racism* to a recrudescent white racism is badly to miss the point.

For years now, white Americans have been told that the goal of racial equality mandates sweeping changes in many of the country's basic institutions, and especially a shift from the thoroughly American principle of individual rights to the very un-American notion of group rights. This aberration has been justified on the grounds that it would lead to a reduction in black poverty, a revival of the inner city, and thus to an altogether more peaceful polity. But black poverty has remained static, the deterioration of the black family and of the inner city has proceeded at a disastrous rate, and race relations have gotten worse. Though *The End of Racism* is not the first or even the most cogently argued analysis of the catastrophic consequences of America's recent race policies, it is the first serious attempt to examine race consciousness in its broad totality, and to locate its historic roots in American liberalism. For this alone, D'Souza's arguments, infuriating though they may be to many readers, are ignored at our peril.

WHICH BRINGS us back to the much more blatant and more dangerous face of race consciousness today.

Even severe critics of Louis Farrakhan have acknowledged the impressive quality of the 500,000 or so men who crowded into the Mall in Washington. By all accounts, these were serious men, devoted to their families and communities, deeply concerned about their children's future, drawn by a message of redemption and personal responsibility rather than by political pleading or race chauvinism. But theirs was not the face at the rostrum.*

Although many have urged that we honor the dignity of the participants while keeping a proper distance from the philosophy of the march's organizer, there are solid grounds for agreeing with Farrakhan and his aides that this cannot be done. It was, after all, Farrakhan's event: he conceived the idea, mobilized the participants, and gave the rally an identity distinct from any previous civil-rights demonstration. And because his imprint was so central, the march must be judged one of the most deplorable political events of recent memory.

Farrakhan's own racism is well-documented. Bigotry is not peripheral to his appeal; it is central. Nor is hatred of whites, Christians, Jews, Asians, and homosexuals a phenomenon of his past. If anything, Farrakhan has become more aggressive lately in denouncing other groups, perhaps because he senses a greater receptivity among black audiences. Thus, in the course of a sermon in Chicago this past March, he praised the writings of a conspiracy theorist who claimed that international Jewish bankers financed the Nazis. "Little Jews died while big Jews made money," Farrakhan announced. "Little Jews [were] being turned into soap, while big Jews washed themselves in it. . . . Jews [were] playing music, while other Jews [were] marching into the gas chambers." This vile item is included in a videotape distributed for promotional purposes by the Nation of Islam.

* The crowd was also not a typical cross-section of black America, or of America in general. According to a *Washington Post* poll, 70 percent had attended college; the marchers also earned higher incomes than most Americans, and were less likely to have been divorced.

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Farrakhan has made it clear that he will neither apologize for nor abandon his hate preachments. And why should he? They are clearly one major source of his strength in the black community. Moreover, as often happens with demagogues, his defiant attitude has had the effect of disarming at least some of his critics, who rationalize his racism as something that he "needs" for political purposes but that can be set aside or ignored in light of the "larger picture"—presumably his message of self-help. Thus is bigotry excused, and a veil of silence cast over Farrakhan's role in inciting racial hatred.

Polls already show blacks, by strong majorities, believing that the government "deliberately makes sure that drugs are available in poor black neighborhoods," and "is deliberately allowing the black community to be destroyed." Farrakhan stokes these fires, as well as the animus of blacks against groups who either live adjacent to black neighborhoods or operate businesses in the inner city. It is not too much to imagine his words being interpreted as a sanction for the pillaging of Korean-American stores by blacks, such as occurred during the 1992 Los Angeles riots, or even the murder of Jews, such as occurred during the 1991 troubles in Brooklyn's Crown Heights section.

Although in his speech at the march Farrakhan was careful not to go too far, others were less inhibited. Thus, former Congressman Gus Savage, well-known mainly for his anti-Semitism and race chauvinism, urged his listeners from the podium to stand up "in defiance of Jewish interests," and asserted that while blacks had fought for Jews in World War II, for South Koreans in the Korean war, and for Vietnamese in the Vietnam war, now these three groups "have come into our community to enrich their own."

As for the "larger picture," it is true that Farrakhan encourages blacks to exercise discipline and to become small capitalists. But he also contends that black economic ambitions are forever being thwarted by the rapaciousness of "bloodsuckers," as he referred to Jews, Koreans, and others a few days before the march. He thus provides a ready-made excuse for failure by reinforcing the perception that America is a society where everything is rigged against black success. Indeed, according to Farrakhan, blacks should reject integration into American society, and should regard themselves as a colonized people trapped in the midst of a great imperial power. Before the march, he announced that it was being held in Washington because that "is the home of our oppression."

Whether or not participants in the march were drawn to the uglier elements of Farrakhan's ideology, it is naive to think these elements did not resonate in the air. And even if open appeals to race hatred were relatively rare at the event, appeals to racial resentment were not. From Jesse Jackson's depiction of contemporary America as "one-half slave and one-half free" to Farrakhan's own statement that blacks cannot "integrate into white supremacy and hold our dignity as human beings," the march featured a nightmare vision of America that is as divorced from reality as was the rhetoric of Black Power a quarter-century ago. Today, in a pattern that has become familiar, this vision is the stock-in-trade of a major black leader.

In that quarter-century, our society has become increasingly invaded by an insidious race consciousness, sanctioned and enforced by our own government. Louis Farrakhan, who claims to detest our American arrangements, is also an emblem of what one American arrangement—counting by race—has wrought.

Is there any way back from this precipice? Should we, indeed, take up President Clinton's proposal for a "frank and brutally honest" debate on race relations? In the aftermath of the Million Man March and the response to the O.J. Simpson verdict, one is almost tempted to suggest the opposite: Americans, it seems, could well benefit from a period of *less* talk about race—about racial feelings, racial differences, racial slights, racial traits, racial stereotypes, and all the rest. To borrow a phrase once invoked by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (for which, needless to say, he was promptly and savagely rebuked), when it comes to racial discourse we could probably all use a period of "benign neglect."

But that cannot be—at least, not yet. The most pressing and urgent task before us, if we are ever to climb out of the morass we have fashioned for ourselves, is to tear down our absurd, counterproductive, and incendiary system of group classifications and preferences, and to reassert the doctrine of race neutrality. This will not happen without a struggle. The hysteria which has already attended the first, hesitant steps toward the de-racialization of government policy is but a sign of things to come. In the light of this response, some critics of racial preferences have even been prompted to suggest a prudent stepping-back from the effort. To anyone who still clings to the rapidly vanishing ideal of interracial harmony, no worse advice can be imagined.

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Facing Up to Black Anti-Semitism

Joshua Muravchik

As THE controversy surrounding the role of Louis Farrakhan in the Million Man March underscored once again, the greatest story of unrequited love in American political life may be the relationship between blacks and Jews.

When the civil-rights revolution broke out in the late 1950's and early 60's, the front-line troops in the Montgomery bus boycott and then in the lunch-counter sit-ins were all blacks, but among the whites who soon rallied to the cause, a large share—a disproportionate share—were Jews. The Freedom Riders rode in integrated detachments; among the whites, Murray Friedman notes in his recent book, *What Went Wrong?: The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance*,* two-thirds were Jews. A few years later came the "Mississippi Summer," a project dreamed up and organized by a Jew, Allard Lowenstein; according to Friedman's estimate, Jews made up from one-third to one-half of the white volunteers who took part. Of the three martyrs of the Mississippi Summer, two, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, were Jews; James Chaney, the local activist who shared their fate, was black.

In another new book, *Blacks and Jews*,† Paul Berman reports that Jews contributed one-half to three-quarters of the financial support received by civil-rights groups in that era. The organizational support they provided was equally pronounced. The Leadership Conference for Civil Rights, the lobbying coalition that helped muscle all modern civil-rights legislation through Congress, was chaired by Clarence Mitchell of the NAACP, but its director was Arnold Aronson, seconded from the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council. This pattern was by no means confined to the upper echelons of the movement; all over the country, Jewish organizations assigned staffers to work on civil rights. In those days, writes Berman, "it was almost as if to be Jewish and liberal were, by definition, to fly a flag for black America."

This was certainly true for my own family. My first visit to the nation's capital took place in 1958, when my parents brought me from New York, at the age of eleven, to the Youth March for Integrated Schools. When the sit-ins began in 1960, my mother and I went to Harlem to join in picketing the Woolworth's on 125th Street. All of the employees and customers were black; most of the picketers were white and, I presume, Jewish like us.

My father devoted his working career to the Jewish Labor Committee; as a matter of course, civil rights were at the top of his professional concerns. My mother's mother, after retiring as a nurse in the

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early 1960's, trekked each week to the Harlem headquarters of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to stuff envelopes. My younger brother and I both belonged to branches of CORE—rival branches—and across our dinner table we argued passionately about the tactical differences between the two. Mine may not have been a typical Jewish family, but in its devotion to the civil-rights movement, it was not unusual.

THEN, JUST as the struggle for civil rights achieved its cardinal victories with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, many of its black activists began to turn away from their original goal, taking up instead the cause of "black power." The meaning of black power was never clearly defined. Its driving motive seemed to be the venting of rage over racial humiliation, a rage that the earlier civil-rights movement had insisted on subordinating to the strategy of nonviolence and sublimating in the rhetoric of Christian love.

One convenient arena for this rage was the movement's own organizations, in which the presence of whites in leading positions, and indeed at all levels, was now regarded as an intolerable affront. In a trice, CORE and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which had been on the cutting edge of the fight for integration, became racially exclusive. For a while, CORE continued to allow my grandmother to stuff envelopes, but in time she was asked not to come back.

With whites in the movement redefined as oppressors, and with so many of the whites being who they were, some of the new hostility was bound to assume an anti-Jewish tone. In 1967, at the Conference for a New Politics organized by leaders of the New Left soon after Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, the black caucus insisted on pushing through a resolution condemning "imperialist Zionist[s]." The following year, during the New York City school strike, leaflets were distributed attacking Jewish teachers as "Middle-East murderers of colored people," and a viciously anti-Semitic poem was read over the radio by the black activist Leslie Campbell.

These developments, cutting so sharply against the fraternal grain of the civil-rights struggle, shocked the Jewish community. Perhaps they should not have done so. For as we are reminded by Murray Friedman, anti-Semitism has in fact had a long history among American blacks. In the 1920's, the "buy-black" campaign of the black-nationalist leader Marcus Garvey was explicitly targeted at Jews, and Garvey later spoke admiringly of Adolf Hitler. Malcolm X, too, was a vociferous anti-Semite in both public and in private. In one meeting with representatives of the Ku Klux Klan, at which he solicited their support for his project of black separatism, Malcolm "assured them," writes Friedman, that "it was Jews who were behind the integration movement."

"Georgia has the Negro and Harlem has the Jew." Thus did the black writer James Baldwin acknowledge in COMMENTARY in February 1948 how widespread anti-Semitism was in his community. In time, Baldwin would demonstrate that he, too, was not above indulging in a little of the practice, as when he wrote that while Christians make up America's true power structure, the Jew "is doing their dirty work." Baldwin went on to denigrate Jewish financial support of civil-rights organizations as mere "conscience money," and to complain bitterly that the Harlem and Watts riots of the mid-1960's were not treated on the same high moral plane as the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943.

Still, Garvey and Malcolm were marginal figures in their time (although Malcolm has loomed larger in death), and Baldwin's tortured formulations, like the outbursts that punctuated the New York City teachers' strike, seem rather tame today in light of the efflorescence of black anti-Semitism in the past decade.

From Jesse Jackson's "Hymietown" remarks, to the rantings of Leonard Jeffries of the City University of New York, to, finally, Louis Farrakhan, the anti-Semitic virus has crept closer and closer to the center of black consciousness. Signposts along the way include the three-day anti-Semitic rampage in 1991 in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn; the rise in open expressions of anti-Jewish sentiment in black popular culture, as in the lyrics of the "rap artists" Public Enemy and Professor Griff and the characters drawn by the filmmaker Spike Lee; propagation of the malicious and utterly false notion that Jews played a prominent role in the slave trade; and opinion polls showing anti-Semitism on the rise among blacks—especially young and better-educated blacks—even as white anti-Semitism has declined.

Farrakhan, heir to Malcolm X (and also thought by many to be the man behind his murder), has notoriously called Judaism a "gutter religion," and described Hitler as "wickedly great." His lieutenant, Khalid Abdul Muhammed, has gone him one better, suggesting that the Jews deserved what the Nazis did:

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> Everybody always talk about Hitler exterminating six million Jews. But don't nobody ever ask what they do to Hitler. . . . They went in there, in Germany, the way they do everywhere they go, and they supplanted, they usurped. . . . They had undermined the very fabric of the society.

Farrakhan's Nation of Islam is a small organization, but even before the Million Man March, it was all too clear that his voice resonated in the black community. In 1984, a full 65 percent of Jesse Jackson's delegates to the Democratic convention said they held a favorable opinion of Farrakhan. In 1988, members of the Congressional Black Caucus gave a standing ovation to Farrakhan when he appeared at their annual convention. When, in 1992, the Nation of Islam published *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*—a tract that in the brazenness of its lies and the virulence of its anti-Semitism rivals *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, itself now also distributed by Farrakhan's group—the black scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. lamented that "it may well be one of the most influential books published in the black community in the last twelve months." And in 1994, when the NAACP under its then-chairman, Benjamin Chavis, insisted on holding a "black-leadership summit" with Farrakhan, it defended the meeting on the grounds of Farrakhan's prestige in the community. After the Million Man March, it is hardly possible to deny that he touches some deep vein in black America.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, the deterioration of relations between blacks and Jews has caused much anguish—at least among Jews. One expression of that anguish is a burgeoning literature on the topic, with some attempting to patch things up, as in *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin*,* a recently published and quite ludicrous "dialogue" between Michael Lerner, the editor of *Tikkun*, and the black scholar Cornel West of Harvard, a prominent organizer of Farrakhan's Million Man March. Sharing the mystical tongue of Marxism and bonded by a common hatred for America, these two soaring Peter Pans of the 1960's Left look down upon the conflicts between their peoples as so much evidence of false consciousness.

The two books mentioned earlier are more down-to-earth, striving to analyze the problem and its history with some dispassion. Murray Friedman's *What Went Wrong?* is perhaps the most informative and richly detailed history we have of black-Jewish relations in America. It is also a kind of lamentation, one which bends over backward to be fair by rehearsing a lengthy catalogue of both the good done and the sins committed by each group. As for *Blacks and Jews: Alliances and Arguments*, edited by Paul Berman, this is an anthology of writings by black and Jewish authors over the past 30 years. It offers such now-famous essays as Norman Podhoretz's "My Negro Problem—and Ours" as well as more contemporary reflections, including by Gates, Shelby Steele, Cynthia Ozick, and others.

With these books in hand, one is tempted to wade into the historical thicket oneself and ask: what, then, accounts for the deepening rift between the two groups—or, to be more precise and more honest about it, what accounts for black anti-Semitism? Why did it reemerge in the very midst of the civil-rights struggle, whose ethos of reconciliation it violated spectacularly? Why has it continued to flourish?

Perhaps the least satisfactory answer to these questions is offered by Berman in his own contribution to *Blacks and Jews*. In an argument reminiscent of the tortured efforts by cold-war doves to balance every Soviet misdeed with a parallel misdeed by the United States, Berman writes that the most recent eruption of black-Jewish tensions is part of a general "downhill slide" from liberalism in which both groups have participated more or less equally. While blacks have their Khalid Mohammeds who defend Hitler's policy of exterminating the Jews, an equivalent though "not exactly parallel" phenomenon exists among Jews: namely, neoconservatism! Black-Jewish amity, in this reading, collapsed under the combined weight of black apologists for Nazism and Jewish apologists for Reaganism. Here, Berman has abandoned entirely the realm of analysis for the easy temptation of taking cheap shots against old enemies.

A more traditional explanation for the rift, offered by James Baldwin among others, is essentially economic in character: blacks have resented the Jewish shopkeepers and landlords in their midst ("bloodsuckers," in Farrakhan's lovely phrase). But few shopkeepers, and not many landlords, grew rich off the ghetto in the past, and fewer still returned after they were burned out in the urban riots of the 1960's. In the ensuing 30 years, the disappearance of such figures should presumably have led to a diminution in anti-Semitism—assuming the Jewish presence was its root cause. Instead, it has increased.

Still another "explanation" is proffered here by

*Putnam, 288 pp., $24.95.

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the black historian Clayborne Carson of Stanford, who lays the blame for black anti-Semitism at the feet of Jewish *organizations*—which, he says, are "overbearing in their insistence that black leaders publicly repudiate isolated expressions of anti-Semitism over which the leaders had no control." This strange inversion—making the Jewish reaction to black anti-Semitism its cause—is repeated by the left-wing black intellectual Derek Bell (formerly of Harvard Law School), who complains that "no other group's leaders are called upon to repudiate and condemn individuals in their groups who do or say outrageous things." But this is truly a damning admission: what other groups' leaders would need such prodding?

As is common knowledge, those expressions of anti-Semitism that black leaders have been called upon to denounce have come not from "individuals" within the black community but from black leaders and intellectual spokesmen themselves. Certainly, if the head of a Jewish organization made outright anti-black statements, other Jewish leaders would hasten to condemn him. They would do this not only because it would be politic, but because they would be outraged. In contrast, one senses that the real reason Carson and Bell and the black leaders they defend have not denounced Farrakhan, and resent being asked to do so, is that they are not genuinely offended by the hatred so apparent in his remarks.

From Bell, for instance, we get insipid euphemisms ("Even those who strongly disagree with some of [Farrakhan's] positions must ask whether the negatives justify total condemnation"), while from Cornel West have come outright rationalizations (Farrakhan, according to West, has spoken positively of Hitler "because he wanted to talk about somebody who created a people out of nothing"). With statements like these, it is hardly surprising that neither West nor Carson nor Bell can offer us any larger understanding of black anti-Semitism and its roots; to varying degrees they are enmeshed in it.

One man to whom we can look for a frank accounting is Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who has had the courage to denounce black anti-Semitism in an unwavering voice. According to Gates, anti-Semitism has become "a weapon in the raging battle of who will speak for black America." Within any politically engaged group, he argues, tactical advantage often accrues to the faction that assumes the role of the greatest militancy and obduracy; Farrakhan has demonstrated the validity of this proposition, and his anti-Semitism is part of that posture. By successfully staking out the most radical political turf, he has thrown more moderate black leaders off-guard. Even those who have not been drawn in must worry that they will be split off from the increasingly radicalized mainstream. (As if to illustrate Gates's point, the NAACP and other groups that had remained aloof from the Million Man March rushed to endorse the "black-leadership summit" announced by Farrakhan and his partner, Ben Chavis, immediately after the event.)

Gates's interpretation of the tactical utility of anti-Semitism is persuasive, but it is only the beginning of an answer. Black anti-Semitism has its source not at the level of political tactics but at a far deeper place in the psyche. Julius Lester, a black writer who has converted to Judaism, has attempted to plumb this region. Blacks, he writes perceptively in this volume, achieve a much greater sense of power when they direct their wrath at Jews rather than at whites generically. For white Americans are in some basic sense invulnerable to anti-white prejudice on the part of blacks. "Honky" may be a linguistic or even a moral analogue to "nigger," but it lacks the same power to insult and to offend, a power that would be vividly on display when the Fuhrman tapes were played before the jury in the O.J. Simpson case. Jews, however, for all their success in America, and unlike Gentile white Americans, feel anything but invulnerable, and harsh words directed at them leave real wounds. Hence the appeal.

One might build upon Lester's argument. No doubt because they have been America's most visible and abused minority, blacks see the world more in racial terms than do whites. With humiliations and insults still an undeniable part of daily life, if much less so than in yesteryear, many blacks may well regard the American ethos of color-blindness as mere hypocrisy. Thus, it is easy to suppose that prejudices based on racial or ethnic distinctions, *including those borrowed from whites*, may live on among blacks with great intensity. The novelist Richard Wright, quoted by Murray Friedman, offers a trenchant illustration of this point: "All of us black people hated Jews . . . because we had been taught . . . that Jews were 'Christ Killers.'"

Among the sources of contemporary black anti-Semitism, envy also surely occupies a significant place. In Berman's *Blacks and Jews*, the black newspaper columnist Joe Wood writes poignantly: "We loved and hated Jews like a second child does the first." This love/hate relation has found its ulti-

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mate expression in the far reaches of Afrocentrism, with the claim that blacks are the actual, real Jews, and that they who call themselves Jews are impostors.

Wood's observation may also, perhaps inadvertently, contain an equally telling insight into the behavior of American Jews. Did not many Jewish participants in the civil-rights movement love the blacks as a first child does the second, basking in their role of benefactor and protector, and unwittingly inviting the resentment that is ever directed at the self-conscious doer of good deeds?

But there is another point to be made in this connection. Envy is a powerful emotion, and certainly, when it comes to the Jews, blacks have much to be envious of. Measured by the standard of material or professional accomplishment, Jews are one of the most successful minorities in America, blacks one of the least. To compound matters, though blacks have suffered far more prejudice and discrimination, Jews too have had to overcome barriers never faced by Gentile whites in America. Yet, on average, Jews are much better off than white Gentiles. The success of the Jews forces a recognition, a painful and bitterly resisted recognition, that prejudice and discrimination are obstacles that can be overcome, and that there is no automatic correspondence between how a group is treated and how it fares.

In an essay in the Berman volume, Leon Wieseltier observes that in renouncing discrimination, America has "dared both [blacks and Jews] to take yes for an answer." Jews have leaped at the chance. Many blacks have hung back, apparently fearing that to accept the dare is to relinquish an excuse for failure. Instead, they have struck a Faustian bargain with affirmative action. The bargain has yielded them some material gains and some "role models," but at the cost of planting the inescapable suggestion that they are unable to compete on their own.

It is the black devotion to affirmative action in its current form that renders meaningless all the talk of rebuilding a black-Jewish alliance. To be cold about it, Jews and blacks today have very few interests in common. It is true that many Jews have historically taken positions inimical to Jewish interests, narrowly conceived, for example by supporting redistributionist economics, dovish foreign policies, and leniency to criminals. But if Jews have been able to disregard some narrow interests, one would like to think that they cannot disregard a broader, deeper one.

Jews have flourished in America as nowhere else in the Diaspora because it is the most meritocratic society in which they have ever had the good fortune to dwell. The principle of equal treatment has liberated Jews from both the injury and the insult of disabilities that were imposed on them for centuries. In that sense, equal treatment constitutes an "interest" of theirs. It is also, however, a matter of transcendent ethical import. It was under the banner of this idea that Jews flocked to the civil-rights movement, and the same idea constituted the only real basis of the black-Jewish alliance that once existed. For Jews eager to restore that alliance, the asking price today is nothing less than that they renounce the principle of equal treatment.

Still, there does remain one powerful Jewish interest congruent with the interests of blacks, and that is racial harmony. Like everybody else in America, but more so, Jews have a stake in black success, for the deterioration of race relations in general is bound to hold special dangers for Jews in particular. That Jews take their responsibilities in this matter seriously is a matter of long and voluminous record. Which only makes it all the more unconscionable that within the black community, hostility to Jews, whatever its ultimate "explanation," should now enjoy a currency and a legitimacy long since faded from the rest of American society.

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Can Giuliani Save New York?

Irwin M. Stelzer

"Now we have a mayor of New York," exclaimed the political reformer Samuel Seabury when Fiorello LaGuardia took over City Hall in 1934. Exactly 60 years later, Rudolph Giuliani, another Italian Republican-Liberal, accomplished the same improbable feat of getting elected in overwhelmingly Democratic New York. Of course, today's New Yorkers are too cynical, and too disillusioned with government, to permit themselves a similarly enthusiastic reaction. But they certainly sense that someone, at last, is in charge. The question remains: is he taking the city in the right direction?

There is something unfair about attempting to appraise the performance of any mayor of New York when he is only halfway through a first term. For one thing, the city is more akin to a lumbering ocean liner than to a speedboat: the huge bureaucracy, the entrenched special interests, the iron dictates of demography combine to make sudden changes of direction difficult to execute; even the most skilled and determined helmsman needs time before he can know how his voyage will fare—or even that it is well and truly under way.

For another thing, the effects of a mayoral initiative are often only barely discernible early in his tenure. If, for example, he changes personnel practices so as to attract more talented municipal employees, the benefits will not become apparent until sufficient time has elapsed to permit a meaningful turnover.

Then, too, under the best of circumstances a mayor's room for maneuver is extremely limited. The foxy British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, once said that the only thing he feared was "events." Everyone who has risen to the pinnacle of what appears to be power in New York must know just what Macmillan meant. A British Prime Minister cannot control exchange rates; a New York mayor cannot control interest rates. If the Federal Reserve Board decides to send those rates up, New York's retail sales, and therefore tax receipts, drop; layoffs, and therefore legitimate claims for public assistance, rise; and, inevitably, mayoral plans to improve the city's fiscal condition come to naught. The level of the dollar is more important to the success of the city's tourist industry (which depends on foreigners for over 40 percent of its revenues) than is the mayor's ability to persuade the hotel industry and its unionized employees to come to mutually agreeable terms. Misguided national-welfare policies can leave any New York mayor impotent to break the cycle of dependency that spells ruin for entire sections of his city.

A New York mayor's power is also limited by the structure of government. In the recent fiasco over the appointment of a new schools chancellor, Giuliani could fume and twist arms, but, for better or worse, he could not put his own man in charge of an educational system so badly managed that it threatens the city's ability to retain its taxpaying

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middle class and to attract business. So, too, with issues as broad as tax policy and as detailed as how to structure the police department: the mayor finds himself a supplicant before a governor, George Pataki, whose election he opposed and who anyhow has his own constituency to cater to, and a senator, Alfonse D'Amato, who has been his sworn enemy for more years than Giuliani has been in elected office.

Add to these impediments the fact that Giuliani is not writing on a clean slate. To be sure, every mayor comes with baggage, personal and institutional. Edward I. Koch brought his Greenwich Village liberalism with him to City Hall in 1978, only to shed much of it when (to borrow from Irving Kristol) he was mugged by reality. David Dinkins (1990-93) brought his faith in the city bureaucracy and clung to it in the face of experience, with the result that he now graces boardrooms and classrooms instead of City Hall.

But Giuliani came to the mayor's office with more baggage than most—specifically, his record as U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York (1983-89), which included years of trampling on the rights of defendants, prosecutorial abuses, and a degree of publicity-seeking that would have been comic had Giuliani not destroyed the reputations of others in a calculated drive to enhance his own. Here was a man willing to arrest innocent people too late at night for them to post bail and so avoid a dangerous night in jail; to swoop into business offices, trailed by photographers, and handcuff weeping executives he would later be unable to indict, much less convict; and simultaneously to arrange such lenient treatment for a confessed felon like Ivan Boesky that this one-time arbitrageur soon became a free and still very rich habitué of the world's pleasure spots.

This legacy has political significance. Any Republican mayor looks to the city's business community for support and cooperation, and he can usually count on it, at least until he treads on some well-shod toes. Giuliani, however, came to City Hall only after having outraged important segments of the financial community and raised severe doubts in many quarters about his character.

So New Yorkers had much to worry about when they decided (by the narrowest of margins) to exchange nice Dave Dinkins for decidedly un-nice Rudy Giuliani. Character matters: it determines whether promises will be kept; whether democratic procedures will be respected or undermined; whether government can make hard choices without forfeiting the respect of the citizenry. The question in Giuliani's case was: could a man modeled on Thomas E. Dewey, an earlier prosecutor who had made it to Albany and almost to the White House more on his fame as a crime-buster than on an endearing personality or a coherent set of policy convictions, really render New York habitable again?

Nor was Giuliani's prosecutorial record the only or even the major item of baggage. Dinkins did not will his successor a city with a few tiny flaws, easily correctable by a policy tweak here and there. Rather, he bequeathed a city on the verge of breakdown, the culmination of decades of catastrophic liberal policies that had forced a flight of the personal and corporate tax base, resulted in a public sector so bloated that over 20 percent of the population was on the government's payroll, and produced a welfare population that included one out of every seven New Yorkers. Giuliani also inherited a bureaucracy that could not clean the streets or provide citizens with a sense that they were safe—or at least not at enormous risk—in attending the city's schools, using its public transport, or walking about of a summer evening.

Worse still, Dinkins's indiscriminate "niceness" had made the city almost ungovernable. The Reverend Al Sharpton and his portable rent-a-mob seemed to have more power than the people's duly elected representatives; neighborhood drug dealers seemed in greater control of the streets than the tightly tethered and demoralized police force; the voluntary homeless and their radical advocates seemed more in charge of the city's housing policies than did the legally appointed administrators of the city's housing stock.

True, against these burdens and constraints must be set an overwhelming advantage, denied to Giuliani's predecessors for more than 60 years. This mayor came into office at a time when the welfare state and the big government it had spawned no longer commanded national support. Even New Yorkers, more tenacious than others in adhering to New Deal nostrums—in 1994, the year of the Gingrich sweep, they chose a congressional delegation of thirteen Democrats and only one Republican—seemed to know that the public larder was bare, that Dinkins-style "compassion" was unaffordable. At least, a sufficient number did to join their fellows in Los Angeles, Jersey City, and other municipalities in expressing a willingness, on the local level, to experiment with smaller government, tougher law enforcement, and an emphasis on individual responsibility.

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THESE, THEN, are the cards Giuliani was dealt. How well has he played them?

Any assessment must begin, perforce, with intangibles. The first of these is the very widespread sense that the city is no longer spinning out of control. In part this is owing to the simple fact that Giuliani regards the phrase "petty crime" as an oxymoron. Scholars like James Q. Wilson, Wesley Skagan, and George L. Kelling have long argued that, in Kelling's words, "disorder is a precursor of serious crime." Giuliani agrees. It was altogether emblematic of his campaign that he made a point of promising to bring assault charges against "squeegee operators," men who menaced drivers with offers to wipe the windshield of their cars. When he made this pledge, the *New York Times* recognized the theory underlying it, but took a dismissive tone:

> The Republican-Liberal candidate stresses the "broken windows" thesis of criminologists that tolerance of petty street disorder has been shown . . . to invite far more felonious problems—just as a broken window that goes unfixed can suggest the broader decline of a building or a neighborhood. Thus is the "war on crime" theme of modern politics taking on urban subtleties.

Dinkins, too, failed to see a campaign against squeegee men as more than an "urban subtlety." "Killers and rapists are a city's real public enemies—not squeegee pests and homeless mothers," he declared.

But Giuliani had it right and Dinkins had it wrong. The squeegee men were not a minor annoyance, or (as some would have it) an army of the involuntarily unemployed seeking gainful occupation. Nor was an offer to wipe a car window equivalent to an offer to sell the driver a newspaper; it was perceived as, and very often was, extortion—a threat to damage the vehicle (or person) of any driver who declined the proffered service—and it induced a feeling of vulnerability, of helplessness, that transcended the specific uncomfortable situation in which the motorist found himself, and fostered a sensation of danger at large.

Ubiquitous rag-wielding windshield cleaners were not the only things creating the impression that the streets were beyond the control of the city's officials. The likes of Sharpton, who could command the mayor's attention at the drop of a demonstration; mobs that closed whole portions of the city to the police; thugs who, unimpeded, terrorized the hard-working Korean immigrants in their grocery stores—all of these sent the unmistakable signal to ordinary citizens, if not to their then-mayor, that the bad guys were in control of the streets.

Giuliani saw all this with crystal clarity, and as mayor he has acted: the wipe-your-windshield-or-else brigade, many of whose members proved on closer inspection to have felony records, is largely gone from the approaches to Manhattan and its busy intersections. Giuliani also stopped the kowtowing to incendiary "activists" by simply refusing to meet with Sharpton, on the quite sensible grounds that he was not worthy of mayoral time.

These moves instantaneously provoked charges of racism. Just as instantaneously, Giuliani defused them by reaching out to the black community's legitimate representatives. Within days of his election and almost two months before his inauguration, he met (to the consternation of some of his supporters) with Harlem Congressman Charles Rangel. The message was unmistakable: the mayor would deal with elected representatives or quiet, rational spokesmen of any group, but not with those whose only claim to an audience was the threat to disrupt the peace and civility of New York life.

The assessment that Giuliani has restored a modicum of order to the city's life is, admittedly, based in part on anecdote. But polls reflect it as well: 42 percent of the city's residents say that police protection has improved since Giuliani took control; only 11 percent think it has deteriorated. And there are also some cold statistical measures of Giuliani's performance in this respect.

Both as a candidate and since taking office, Giuliani has made public safety his top priority, and with good reason. Safe streets are not only desirable in and of themselves, they are a key ingredient in any long-term plan to revive the city's flagging economy. Businessmen seeking new locations, or deciding on expansion, place great emphasis on their ability to attract young professionals, and on the safety of their own families. Because an unsafe city is very likely to become an economically blighted city, crime prevention is an important ingredient of economic development: the recent murder of a few tourists in Florida frightened hundreds of thousands of others into finding safer places to visit.

Hence the significance of the large drop in crime in the past year. According to the New York City Police Department (NYPD), murders were down by more than 40 percent in the first six months of 1995 as compared with the same period in 1993, Dinkins's last year in office; car thefts had fallen by

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more than 35 percent, robberies by 32 percent, and burglaries by 24 percent. Even incidents of forcible rape, a figure one would have expected to trend upward because of the increased willingness of victims to report this crime, have dropped by about 5 percent. And all of this has occurred in the face of only a slight decrease in the teenage population, the group most likely to commit violent crimes.

That factors other than the policies of Giuliani and his police commissioner, William Bratton, have contributed to this development—which even the generally anti-Giuliani *New York Times* concedes is "little short of amazing"—is quite possible; several other large cities have also recorded significant reductions in crime recently. But it would be churlish to deny that more cops on the streets, more efficiently deployed, together with the boost the police have received from a mayor who declines to see a moral equivalence between cops and robbers, and has no truck with "root-cause" explanations of crime as the result of "social injustice,"* are primary factors in a trend that may bring the murder rate down to its lowest level in 25 years.

This seems demonstrably to be true for the decline in street shootings. Police officials themselves credit the drop in this bloody activity to the increase in arrests on gun charges in the past two years. According to Jack Maple, the mayor's deputy commissioner of crime-control strategy, those arrests are, in turn, the fruit of a Giuliani-ordered crackdown on such supposedly minor and previously unpunished crimes as graffiti-scrawling, urinating in public, the loud playing of radios, public beer drinking, and illegal lane-changing. He points out that the tough new policy permits the police to frisk perpetrators and to check their records for outstanding warrants, with the consequence that criminals tend increasingly to leave their guns at home.

Whether the mayor's success against street crime can be extended to a reduction of organized corruption remains to be seen. Certainly, the NYPD itself has a long way to go before it can be pronounced as squeegee-clean as the city's intersections. And the recent attempt to wrest control of the Fulton Street fish market from alleged racketeers cannot yet be pronounced a success. For one thing, the banning of firms only *suspected* of being controlled by the mob brings to mind the Giuliani of an earlier day, setting himself up as prosecutor, judge, and jury. For another, the cost of the so-called reform may prove to be inordinately high, in part because new workers are inexperienced but in part, too, because the new paperwork requirements imposed by the city's bureaucrats are so onerous.

In any event, there can be no gainsaying that New Yorkers feel safer, and are safer, than in many a year. Nor is there any question that the city's "quality of life" seems to be improving in other respects as well. The mayor's recent *Management Report* points with pride to the (modest) increases in the number of streets rated "acceptably clean," in the number of parks and playgrounds in "acceptable" condition, and even to the decline in water-main breaks.

EDUCATION IS another, and less happy, tale. Here, Giuliani can legitimately claim that his power is severely limited. His efforts to cut the bloated Board of Education bureaucracy have been undertaken in the teeth of educrats clinging to a system in which it is impossible even to know how many of *them* there are. His fight to improve safety in the schools founders on the rock of civil libertarians eager to protect students' privacy from the probing eyes of metal detectors. His attempts to upgrade the quality of teaching are thwarted by teachers' unions that elevate seniority over excellence, and by politically-correct administrators devoted to expensive exercises in multiculturalism, bilingualism, and "special-education" projects.

In Giuliani's own words, "The entire [public-education] system is in great, great danger. If we don't do something dramatic, it is going to collapse." This is true, and little wonder. The city's per-pupil annual cost of $8,000 exceeds the national average by 60 percent, and is twice that of New York's parochial schools, which have fewer dropouts, are generally safe, and send a larger proportion of their students on to college.

But by and large, although Giuliani talks the talk, he has yet to walk the walk. Rather, he has dithered, producing mostly diatribes against the Board of Ed, groans about the current state of the system, speeches in praise of parochial schools, and futile efforts to impose a personally acceptable chancellor. He has hesitated to deploy his famed political hard-ball tactics to develop a voucher system that would free the city's one million students to choose their own schools—despite the fact that in a recent survey fully 60 percent of those polled in New York City favored "a program which would allow parents to send their children to the public, parochial, or private school of their choice and use

*As the mayor has put it, "There is absolutely no correlation between unemployment and crime. Go look at the Depression. It was one of the safest periods in the history of this country."

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state and local tax dollars to pay for all or part of it."

The mayor's reluctance to push for radical reform is doubly unfortunate. Like the fight against crime, the battle to revamp the city's school system has an importance beyond producing graduates who can read and write. The quality of education determines the quality of the city's workforce, and hence its ability to thrive in an increasingly competitive world economy. It is also a major element in the relative attractiveness of New York to businesses. In a recent *Forbes* survey, New York received only two out of a possible five points for the quality of its "general education," ranking below 59 other large metropolitan areas. Such is the stuff, again, of which business-location decisions are often made.

WHICH BRINGS us to the city's fiscal condition. The job-destroying effect of high local taxes, in an economy in which instantaneous telecommunications have increased the mobility of resources, is too well known to warrant rehearsal here. Even Mario Cuomo, the former governor of New York, came to recognize (belatedly) that businesses and skilled professionals can now vote against higher taxes with their feet, and that New York was pricing itself out of the investment and jobs markets.

But businessmen look at more than the current level of taxes when deciding where to put long-lived plant and equipment. They look as well at the likely *future* levies they will have to bear. A city on the brink of financial disaster is a city facing a great temptation to raise taxes, a temptation to which it often surrenders (while pledging that this will be its last fling before going on an austerity diet). Or it will be tempted to cut just those services that are important to the business community, in order to maintain payments to the more numerous voters who benefit from its various welfare programs. This is a particular danger in New York, where (as mentioned earlier) 20 percent of the labor force works in public and social services, and one in seven persons receives some form of public assistance.

Only a mayor willing to defy this formidable bloc of voters, and to impose short-term pain in the interest of long-term gain, can hope to bring some order to a city budget that, like its streets, has seemed beyond the control of mayor and City Council alike.

Equally important, the city's budget is the battleground on which competing philosophies of the role of government are defined in the very practical terms of "priorities." In the long run, safer streets and lower taxes mean more jobs and fewer poor people, as well as an increased flow of revenues into the city's coffers. But in the short run, more cops mean fewer teachers, and lower taxes to encourage business mean less money to fund welfare programs and education. Giuliani may, like Prince Hamlet, contend that "I must be cruel only to be kind," but his critics see his budgets as merely cruel.

The hard fact, too, is that the city's budgetary fate is decided not only in City Hall but in Albany and, of course, in Washington. Thus, Giuliani's plan to cut expenses was derailed when the governor and the state legislature refused to trim Medicaid and welfare programs to which the city contributes a share of the costs. And the federal budget-cutting being undertaken by the Republicans in Washington will be felt in areas ranging from transportation and medicine to the welfare system and beyond.

Given all this, how has Giuliani fared? His staff claims he will save $2.3 billion in 1996 over what would have been spent if expenditures in a second Dinkins term had grown at the same rate as in the first. An analysis by the city's Office of Management and Budget shows a $1-billion reduction in expenses of city agencies in fiscal 1995, and another $1.2-billion cut in 1996, part of gap-closing efforts of $2.3 billion and $3.1 billion respectively. These initiatives, which have contributed to ending the seemingly inexorable rise in city expenses, and may reverse them, have brought projected outlays to a bit more than $31 billion, about half of which goes to wages for city workers.

What do the reductions mean substantively? Welfare, Medicaid, education, and other city services have been cut, as have a variety of business taxes. Giuliani had to cede some ground to the City Council, restoring a few hundred million for school renovation and $80 million to youth services, mental health, arts groups, and similar supplicants, and lowering some business taxes by a smaller amount than at first proposed. Overall, though, he did succeed—somewhat—in shrinking government and—again, somewhat—in imposing his priorities: less welfare spending, more police protection, lower taxes.

But the price he paid was this: an electorate that voted for fiscal prudence as a general proposition nevertheless found Giuliani's specific cuts so distasteful that his popularity plummeted. And, paradoxically, so did New York's standing with the bond-rating agencies. This summer, Standard & Poor's lowered the city's rating for the first time

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since 1975, when it was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. The IOU's of Rudy Giuliani's New York now rank just a notch above those of Marion Barry's Washington, D.C., and well below the bonds of such troubled cities as Baltimore and Chicago.

The real problem is the bloated municipal workforce, whose staffing practices are a tribute to historic union resolve and mayoral pusillanimity. Giuliani contends that, politics being the art of the possible, he has achieved much of what is possible in this realm: the city's payroll has been trimmed by 17,000 positions, largely through buyouts; agreements already reached with unions have realized $2 billion in savings; health-insurance costs per employee are declining; and (in the words of the city's then-commissioner of labor relations) the mayor's "partnership with municipal unions . . . has empowered and energized the city's workforce."

Unfortunately, the $600 million in savings the mayor expects from the 83 municipal unions is less than 4 percent of New York's $15.8-billion wage bill. And, as Standard & Poor's noted in lowering the city's rating, some $160 million of the $600 million may never materialize. Yet Giuliani, although he has fought some noble fights, has conspicuously avoided a real shoot-out with the unions, in good part because he wants their support for his 1996 reelection bid. The boasts about "partnership" notwithstanding, not one of the city's 207,000 unionized workers has been laid off, or had his generous benefits, vacation time, or sick days reduced.

The result of all this is that the combined debt of the Municipal Assistance Corporation (formed in the mid-70's to see New York out of bankruptcy) and the city stands at $28 billion, and is rising. This, notes the *Economist*, means that "New York may face a crisis almost as grave as its problems of twenty years ago." Then, Governor Hugh Carey bailed the city out. But George Pataki is no Hugh Carey. He knows that his own upstate electoral margin increased dramatically when Giuliani decided to support Mario Cuomo for governor. Helping to save the city will not produce votes for Pataki; to the contrary, he would do better, politically, by saying to New York what President Gerald Ford is reputed to have said but never did—namely, "Drop dead."

TO CONCLUDE that the mayor has failed to solve the city's long-festering fiscal crisis in the first half of what he hopes is his first term is not to say that his is a failed administration. Far from it. He has kept his word, or at least tried to. Candidate Giuliani promised to reduce crime; Mayor Giuliani has done so. Candidate Giuliani promised to attack the city's welfare and tax burdens; Mayor Giuliani has done that. Candidate Giuliani promised to restore sanity to the city's budget; Mayor Giuliani has begun that chore, even though he has nowhere near completed it.

And so, were Giuliani to ask, Ed Koch-like, "How'm I doin?," the fair answer might be: "Not bad." Or, to put it in terms of the question posed at the very beginning of this article, yes, he is taking the city in the right direction.

But is this enough? Giuliani has played his cards reasonably well; but he is in a high-stakes game, in which the real prize is not a slowing of the city's descent into the abyss of urban decay, but a reversal. *That* prize may well be reserved for a gambler with more nerve than the Giuliani we have seen so far, someone prepared not just to play his cards well but to demand that the deck be reshuffled and that he be dealt a new hand. Someone on the order of a Margaret Thatcher, a Ronald Reagan, a Newt Gingrich.

Contrast the mayor's performance with that of the two most successful conservative politicians of our time, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The power of the British trade unions, which had brought successive British governments to their knees, made that of New York's pale by comparison. But Prime Minister Thatcher won and the unions lost, bowled over by the resolve of the "Iron Lady" as well as by her ability to rally public opinion and stiffen the spines of timid politicians. Similarly Ronald Reagan in the case of the air-traffic controllers: their threat to shut down America's air-transport system failed—not because the President sought some compromise that would keep the controllers on the job and win political support from other powerful public-employees' unions, but because he was willing to lock them out and to serve notice that the nation would not be held to ransom. As for Gingrich and his acolytes, whether they will succeed in their effort to balance the budget, halt the growth in the welfare state, and reduce the role of central government remains to be seen. But they would surely have failed altogether had they sought to accommodate rather than rout their opponents.

Herein lies hope. Strange things happen when leaders lead, and they could happen even in New York. The task facing the man of the hour is as simple in theory as it is difficult in fact: reduce the bloated compensation of city employees suffi-

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ciently to balance the budget, tolerating some strikes, breaking others; decentralize power, moving some from City Hall to the boroughs and some directly to the people; and end "welfare as we know it"—really end it.

Giuliani has the wit and administrative skills for this task. But it is often ambition, not conscience, that makes cowards of us all, and so far, Giuliani has allowed his political ambition to override his understanding of what yet needs to done. His impressive short-term successes appear to have lulled him into the wishful belief that he can save New York without alienating union members, without empowering parents to break the hold of the education establishment, and without overcoming such deep-seated, structural problems as the city's tax-consuming welfare system. He cannot.

To go farther, to do what is necessary, is admittedly a formidable challenge. New Yorkers are far from fully reconciled to Giuliani's local version of the Contract With America, and if the mayor embarks on a more radical course, he will almost certainly find the political going tougher than ever. He has already lost the backing of much of the Republican party by his ill-considered foray into state politics in support of the profligate Mario Cuomo, and his decidedly less-than-wholehearted support for the sinking campaign of Senator D'Amato's presidential candidate, Bob Dole, will not help. The Liberal party, even in its current pragmatic incarnation, can be expected to tolerate just so much of a retreat from its New Deal heritage before jumping ship. And the Democratic party remains the dominant political organization in the city, loaded with candidates eager to appeal to those who feel the mayor has shortchanged them.

If he opts for a harder course than he has so far dared, Giuliani may soon be one lonely mayor. But he would have right on his side, and who knows what fresh wellsprings of civic energy and hope. These were enough to enable Margaret Thatcher to reverse Britain's decline, and Ronald Reagan to win the cold war. They might even be enough to save New York.

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Israel—With Grandchildren

Norman Podhoretz

The following was obviously written before the black day on which Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. It is no secret that I have been highly critical of the peace process over which Rabin was presiding, and it should come as no surprise that this caused a personal rupture between us. I first met Rabin in 1967 in Israel, right after the Six-Day War, when he was still chief of staff of the Israeli armed forces. Then, a year or so later, on his way to Washington to take over as the newly appointed ambassador to the United States, he stopped at my apartment in New York where (at the request of the Israeli consul-general) I had arranged for him to meet a group of prominent American intellectuals. Though I had not found him exactly endearing in our first meeting in Jerusalem, I was charmed—and also much impressed—by his ill-concealed amazement at some of the incredibly foolish things that were said to him that night. In the ensuing years, I saw him many times, and though we never became close friends, our relations were always relatively cordial. When, however, I began voicing my misgivings over the changes in his thinking that led to the handshake with Yasir Arafat on the White House lawn, he understandably grew cold, and after one very tense accidental encounter in Jerusalem, I never saw him again.

The article that follows was all but on press when the news came of his assassination, and my immediate inclination—as well as that of the editor of COMMENTARY*—was to suppress it as being out of date, and perhaps also as unseemly. But on further reflection we decided to let it ride as a record of how things stood before Rabin was murdered and as an account of forces that are still at work in Israel and that will continue to make themselves felt even now that he is gone. Given the difficulty in my relations with him, his passing has caused me more personal grief than I would have expected. But personal feelings and political disagreements aside, my judgment is that his assassination was a crime so horrible that it will be remembered as one of the great infamies of Jewish history.*

Friday, September 1

ONLY MINUTES after we arrive at the airport we get the big news from Noam, the eldest of our four Israeli grandchildren and the one whose bar mitzvah we have come to celebrate: "We have a McDonald's in Jerusalem now—*non*-kosher!" From the enthusiasm with which he stresses the fact that this new McDonald's is non-kosher, one might think that Noam was a precocious version of one of those militant secularists who abound in Israel, and especially in Jerusalem where the highly visible presence and power of the ultra-Orthodox *haredim* have provoked among many people a backlash against religion in general. Not at all: his aim is to underline

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the difference between the new McDonald's and the strictly kosher Burger Ranch (or "*Boorger Rench*," as the Jerusalemites call it) to which on previous visits my wife and I have sometimes taken him and his three younger siblings (Alon, almost ten, and the five-year-old twins Boaz and Avital) for a special treat. This new McDonald's in Jerusalem, Noam wants us to understand, is the real thing—exactly the same as the ones he has come to love so well from previous visits of his own to America.

I will remember this little episode a few days later when watching a clip on CNN (that constant companion of the contemporary American traveler abroad) featuring demonstrations by participants at the UN conference on women in Beijing. None of these demonstrations seems to have anything directly to do with women as such. One, for example, is against American imperialism—a theme I naively thought had gone out with button shoes, or anyway the cold war, and whose reappearance makes me feel almost nostalgic. Another is directed against the resumption of nuclear testing by the French, reminding me by the novelty of its target country that the cold war really has ended.

But the most bizarre group of protesters consists of a gaggle of young American women stomping on an effigy of Ronald McDonald and screaming hysterically: "Get out of my backyard! Get out of my country! Get out of my world!" Clearly McDonald's, with its nutritionally incorrect menu and its putatively carcinogenic plastic wastes, has replaced Coca-Cola as the great symbol of a metastasizing American plague in this post-cold-war world—a world more apocalyptic about ecology than about nuclear holocaust and where opposition to nuclear weapons (as the anti-French protests reveal) is itself now based not on the fear of war but on the horror of environmental contamination.

Yet it strikes me that, like Coca-Cola before it, what McDonald's really symbolizes is the universality of human nature. Once, there seemed to be no country and no culture whose people did not fall in love with Coca-Cola the minute they tasted it; and today (to borrow a slogan invented for another product), nobody doesn't like a Big Mac—nobody, anywhere on earth. Where these things are concerned, at least, the dream of Schiller and Beethoven has been realized and all men have already become brothers.

Nor is McDonald's the only sign of progress to which Noam points on the drive from the airport to Jerusalem. "We also have Tower Records and Blockbuster Video," he announces proudly to our granddaughter, his American cousin Sarah ("Nani," to her family). Fresh (and flush) from her own very recent bat mitzvah, Nani has come with us to join in Noam's bar-mitzvah celebration while getting her first taste of a foreign country.

Eager to sharpen that taste, and forgetting (if I ever really knew, despite having raised four of them) what thirteen-year-olds are like, I fatuously suggest to Noam that he point out some of the sights to her as we enter Jerusalem. He pauses thoughtfully and then bursts out: "You see that building over there? It's a great place for rollerblading!"

Later, I laugh about this with his mother, our daughter Ruthie, who has now been in Israel for eighteen years, almost half her entire life. She adds to the merriment by informing me that after we were dropped off at the hotel, Noam as an afterthought proposed that Nani visit Yad Vashem, Jerusalem's grim memorial to the Holocaust. "That's what Israel adds up to for an Israeli kid," cracks Ruthie, "McDonald's and the Holocaust."

But once we have had our laugh, she is off on a tirade against the Israeli educational system. As she has told me more than once, secular schools in Israel suffer from all the vices of the "progressive" philosophy of education that was so fashionable in her own childhood in America. Thanks to this system, Israeli kids are largely left to their own devices and taught very little about anything, including their own history. ("If you ask an Israeli kid who the Maccabees are, he'll think you're talking about the local basketball team.") On the other hand, thanks to cable TV, Israeli kids know everything there is to know about America: O.J. Simpson, Michael Jackson, and *NYPD Blue* are more familiar to them than King David or, for that matter, David Ben-Gurion. But this subject soon gets us laughing again at the picture it brings back of Alon, watching television on a visit to New York when he was about six years old and yelling out excitedly in Hebrew to Noam: "Hey, they've got *McGyver* here, too!" (Along the same lines, this very evening five-year-old Boaz, checking up on the possibilities of cross-cultural communication with his cousin from America, will ask her: "Do you know what means Power Rangers in English?")

Sunday, September 3

SPEAKING OF school, Friday was supposed to be the first day of the new semester, but because of a brief strike by teachers protesting a cut in funds for security guards, the opening is postponed until today (Sunday being an ordinary working day in Israel). Noam is now in high school (they refer

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to it, European-style, as a *gymnasium*), and out of curiosity to see what the place looks like, I accompany Nadav, my Israeli son-in-law, when he takes time out from his law practice to pick Noam up at the end of the school day.

Having expected something dingy, I am oddly pleased when it turns out to be a fairly new and rather attractive building. But the first thing that hits my eye as we enter is an explosion of graffiti, all of them in English. "FUCK YOU" screams one wall. "FUCK YOUR SISTER" declares another, to which the viewer's attention is helpfully directed by arrows on the floor. And a third, in the largest letters of all, simply says "COOL." This, I gather, is meant as a self-gratulatory comment on the whole project: as Noam, who is completely bilingual himself, explains when I ask why the vandals have used English instead of Hebrew, "English is cool" (so much so that the word itself, pronounced *kul*, has now been imported into Hebrew).

For this we needed a Jewish state? That used to be the all-purpose Israeli *mot* in the face of anything that departed from pristine Zionist utopianism, and it immediately springs to mind, bringing with it a wry smile at the thought that I, who once made fun of that slogan, should now be involuntarily invoking it in all seriousness myself. And it springs to mind again on a walk we take later that afternoon along a lively pedestrian mall in the center of Jerusalem. It is filled with cafés and restaurants and shops of every variety, including the (to me) now fabled McDonald's, whose presence is announced with a sign reading: "McDonald's—One Minutes [*sic*] Away." (English may be *kul* but it is still a foreign language in the Jewish state.) The mall is also crowded with Israelis of every variety, from *haredim* dressed all in black to a young woman dressed all in black herself except for the words emblazoned in white on her very tight T-shirt which read, "WHO GIVES A SHIT?"

For this we needed a Jewish state? Well, I say to myself, yes. After all, one of the main purposes of establishing a Jewish state was to bring about "the normalization of the Jewish people." Of course, the early Zionist thinkers who developed this concept had something else in view. They envisaged a situation in which Jews, instead of being concentrated overwhelmingly as they were in the Diaspora in a few occupations (and thereby arousing resentment), would like all other peoples work at everything: they would be not only doctors and lawyers and bankers and journalists but also farmers and laborers and soldiers and policemen.

Some early Zionists saw this as one of many ways to cure the "pathologies" and straighten out the "deformations" which, they believed, living in the Diaspora for 2,000 years had wrought in the Jewish character: in a sovereign state of their own the Jews would flourish once again and regain the kind of greatness they had shown in biblical times. But there were other Zionist thinkers who cherished the opposite hope: that living in a sovereign state of their own would turn the Jews not into a special or superior breed but into "a people like all other peoples." And so, on the evidence of McDonald's and obscene graffiti and T-shirts and cable television, it has come to pass.

Yet that is far, very far, from the whole story. For one thing, the dream of a "normal" occupational distribution has largely been realized in Israel. Not, to be sure, entirely, since most construction work and many menial jobs are done by Palestinians. Still, Jews now fill most other occupations from which they had traditionally either been barred or which for one reason or another they had avoided in the Diaspora. This is now so commonplace that younger Israelis find it hard to understand a joke that circulated when the state was still in its infancy. It was about a survivor of the Holocaust who cringed at the sight of a policeman in Tel Aviv until he was told that the policeman was a Jew, at which he straightened up and said: "A Jew? Well, to hell with him, then!"

For another thing, the Jews of Israel *have* developed into a different breed from their ancestors and relatives in the Diaspora. The most spectacular instance is the Israeli army (the Israel Defense Force, or IDF, to call it by its proper name). Jews in the Diaspora were not notable for their skill in or enthusiasm for the military arts, but the IDF has become one of the best armies in the world. Conversely, in intellectual and scholarly pursuits, an area where Jews might have been expected to excel, the Israelis (despite their accomplishments in technology) are relatively weak: the Hebrew University is not one of the best institutions of higher learning in the world.

Not that its faculty has lacked for great scholars like the late Gershom Scholem, whose pioneering work on Jewish mysticism constitutes one of the towering academic and intellectual achievements of the 20th century. But it was Scholem himself who once explained to me why the Jewish state should have turned out to be better at fighting wars than at realizing the dream of cultural efflorescence that had converted him, a young German-Jewish intellectual from a highly assimilated

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family, to Zionism and brought him in the 1920's from Berlin to Jerusalem and eventually to a professorship at the Hebrew University. The Jews, he said (speaking with a wistfulness rooted in his fundamentally pacifist tendencies), are a talented people, and talent goes where it is needed; at this stage of Jewish history it is needed in the army, and so that is where it has gone.

WITH THESE words of Scholem running once again through my head, as they so often have done, I go to meet A., an Israeli friend who in his own person seems to contradict them. He is a professor who has done internationally recognized work in his field, and is at the same time a high-ranking reserve officer in the IDF with a distinguished military record. Contemplating this combination of talents, I say to myself, well, for this we certainly did need a Jewish state.

Yet listening to him talk is enough to make me wonder—and not for the first time—whether the Jewish state we needed, and need, can survive yet another form of "normalization"—the one that goes by the name of the "peace process." No doubt the species of normalization represented by obscene graffiti in English and McDonald's and cable television would have horrified old Zionist theoreticians like Ahad Ha'am and A.D. Gordon, but these things are no threat to the continued existence of the Jewish state. A., however, thinks, as I do, that the peace process will bring not peace but war—a war first with the Palestinians but then drawing in most of the Arab states who will set aside their own internecine conflicts and seize on this one last chance to defeat Israel militarily. Even if Israel should win, the cost would be tremendous, and in a monstrous irony the Israelis would wind up reoccupying the very territories from which their forces would have withdrawn in the hope of achieving peace. But if Israel were to lose, the Jewish state that we needed, and need, would come to a horrible and bloody end.

While agreeing that the peace process is a form of normalization, A. and I disagree about the sense in which it is so. As I see it, negotiations with the PLO were undertaken by a nation so war-weary that it was becoming as debellicized and as averse to the military arts as all other democratic countries "normally" are.

A.'s take on the negotiations is different. A Labor-party man for most of his life, he nevertheless feels that under the government of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, Israel has revealed itself not as a normal nation, but rather as one still marked by certain of those traditionally Jewish "pathologies" and "deformations" that statehood was supposed to have corrected. A normal nation, he maintains, would never sue for peace when it was powerful and its enemies were weak. Yet this is in effect what Rabin and Peres have done. At the very moment when Israel's armed might remained intact and when the PLO had fallen into total disarray—demoralized, discredited, and bankrupt because its support of Saddam Hussein in the Gulf war had deprived it of its Arab patrons—the Israelis resurrected a politically moribund Yasir Arafat and offered him land and (implicitly) statehood in exchange for a few paper promises and a few honeyed words.

I would find this interpretation more persuasive if it did not overlook the fact that in its last war with the Palestinians—that is, the *intifada*—Israel for all practical purposes lost, largely because it could not and would not continue doing what was necessary in order to win; and it also overlooks the great psychological damage done to the Israelis, to their morale and their fighting pride, when they were forced by the United States under George Bush to sit by passively during the Gulf war while Iraq rained missiles on their heads.

In other words, I say, Rabin may justify his policy by talking of the new opportunities for peace that have been opened up by the demise of the Soviet Union, which no longer arms and instigates the enemies of Israel against it; and Peres may prate of a new Middle East in which everyone is more interested in making money than in making war. But in their negotiations with the Palestinians they are acting not like far-sighted statesmen or magnanimous victors—or for that matter like "deformed" products of the Diaspora—but like the leaders of a defeated nation; and in that way too they are acting normally.

My allusion to Peres's rhetoric prompts A. to tell me about the interview Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president, has just given to an Israeli journalist in which he ridicules the idea that there is a new Middle East. Mubarak should know. After all, at the huge international conference convened last year in Casablanca to explore the supposedly new opportunities for investment in the Middle East, the Egyptian delegation showed up with a 90-page booklet of proposals for joint economic development in which the name of Israel was never so much as mentioned; nor did Israel appear on any of the six maps of the region contained in the booklet. But as A. points out, Jordanian maps do not acknowledge the existence of Israel either—and Egypt and Jordan are the two Arab coun-

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tries which have signed peace treaties with the Jewish state.

Monday, September 4

I MEET WITH L., an eminent Israeli writer, and the only old friend I have left here from the other side of the political divide. Once upon a time, and even after I had begun the rightward movement that eventually landed me in the conservative camp, virtually all my Israeli friends were to one degree or another on the Left. But until fairly recently, being on the Left in Israel did not necessarily involve illusions about the desirability of a Palestinian state run by the PLO and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Nor did it entail a willingness to give up the Golan Heights in exchange for a treaty with Syria. On the contrary, as I have often pointed out to certain critics who accuse me of parroting the Likud line, it was not Menachem Begin or Yitzhak Shamir or their successor as the leader of Likud, Benjamin Netanyahu, who taught me that a Palestinian state would constitute a mortal threat and that Jerusalem must never be divided again and that Israel must never surrender the Golan Heights; it was Labor leaders like Golda Meir and Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin (the last of whom reiterated precisely these positions when campaigning in the last election).

Nor did being on the Left entail the blame-Israel-first mentality that by now has become as widespread among Israeli intellectuals as anti-Americanism was in the United States in the days of Vietnam. In this respect, the Israeli Labor party of old and its supporters in the intellectual community resembled their counterparts in the West during the first phase of the cold war, when social democrats everywhere recognized Communism as a menace and resolved to hold the line against it. Only later did some of these same staunchly anti-Communist social democrats (typified most vividly by Willy Brandt in Germany) turn almost 180 degrees, adopting a revisionist view of the cold war according to which the United States was at least as much to blame for starting it as the Soviet Union, and becoming enthusiastic proponents of accommodation with the Kremlin.

Applying Dr. Johnson's famous maxim that the prospect of hanging concentrates the mind wonderfully, I once assumed that the social democrats in a besieged Israel would be immune from the local variant of this disease. No such luck. To cite only one among many telling examples of the spread of the infection to Israel, Shimon Peres, who in a former incarnation did so much to build up the IDF, has become the Willy Brandt of the Arab war against Israel.

The ground of this transformation was assiduously prepared by the intellectual community of Israel. Long before the demise of the Soviet Union, or the putative changes in the Arab world on which Rabin and Peres would later rely in justifying their own change of mind and heart, many Israeli intellectuals were already blaming their country for the murderous hatred it inspired in others. They accused Israel not only of oppressing the Palestinians since 1967, when the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza began, but of primal sins and crimes that called the very foundations of the Jewish state's existence into question. In this too they resembled the American intellectuals of the Vietnam period who, not content with attacking the war as a discrete blunder or even a crime, represented it as the poisoned fruit of a rotten tree—just the latest manifestation of the evil endemic to American history and inherent in American society. The difference is that whereas no one in America was going to be driven by such ideas into actually giving the country back to the Indians, Israeli politicians like Rabin and Peres were about to turn over a large swath of territory to the Palestinians.

Most of my other former friends on the Israeli Left have surrendered to these ugly ideas and attitudes, but not L. He supports the peace process, but with ever diminishing enthusiasm, and he does so mainly because he thinks that it is a better alternative than continuing to rule over a million Palestinians, not because he regards Israel as the guilty party in this conflict. Far from buying Peres's vision of a new Middle East in which the lion will lie down and then form a business partnership with the lamb, he looks forward to the opposite: the complete "separation" between Israel and the Palestinians that Rabin sometimes holds out as the true goal of his policy.

"Let them," L. says with clenched teeth, "go their way and we will go ours. The main thing is to rid ourselves of this corrupting occupation." As for my dire predictions of what this course will bring with it, he would love to dismiss them out of hand. Yet even though he trusts Rabin to shed the burdens of the occupation without jeopardizing Israel's security, he is in all honesty unable to deny that the dangers on which I keep harping are real, any more than I can cavalierly wave away the possibility that I may be all wet. And so we can still talk across a divide that has become too great for me and all my other former friends in Israel to bridge.

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Since L. is so untypical, I cannot be sure that his growing skepticism about the peace process is indicative of the mood of the camp to which he belongs. But the impression I get from skimming the press is that little remains of the post-Oslo euphoria even among Israeli intellectuals. The intellectual community—concentrated here as in America in the universities, the arts, and the media—had almost to a man persuaded itself that the Palestinians really had changed, that they had given up the dream of wiping Israel off the map, and that they were ready to live in peace alongside a reduced Jewish state. But the increase in terrorism since Oslo has shaken even the intellectuals, as has Arafat's inability or unwillingness to stop it, or to fulfill the other promise he made there, namely, to abrogate the commitment to the destruction of Israel in the Palestinian National Charter. Very likely this is why they have quietly dropped their utopian expectations and fallen back, like L. and like Rabin himself, on "separation" as the most desirable goal.

Tuesday, September 5

PUBLIC OPINION is another matter, as I learn today from G., one of the very few journalists in Israel who opposes the government's policy. Among the general public, he informs me, "separation" is a popular idea, but the wave of terrorism has still eaten into support for the peace process, and therefore for Rabin. Having been way ahead of Netanyahu in the aftermath of Oslo, he now runs about neck and neck with him, except when there is a terrorist attack, at which point Netanyahu forges ahead. But according to G.'s careful analysis of the polls, the political effect of a terrorist attack fades after about two months and then they go back to a 50-50 split. It follows that, other things being equal, the next election (scheduled for 1996) may well be decided by the Palestinians. If they restrain themselves in the weeks before election day, Rabin could squeak through; if not, Netanyahu will become the next Prime Minister. The problem is that by then it may be too late to stop or reverse the slide down the slippery slope.

R., a close friend and former government official with whom I meet after leaving G., is not so coolly analytic. In fact, he is in despair over Rabin. It was not ever thus with him. When I began expressing my gloomy opposition to the policy of the Rabin government even before Oslo made it official, R. would always counter by assuring me that Rabin, whom he knew well and for whom he had once worked, could be depended upon to hold firm. True, Peres in his view was another matter and would stop at nothing to make a deal (meaning that, for all Peres's denials, he was already prepared to accept a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital and to withdraw entirely from the Golan Heights); and Peres's deputy Yossi Beilin was even worse (meaning that he was ready to do all this tomorrow). But Rabin would never cross certain "red lines."

Then, when Rabin crossed the first of these lines in accepting the PLO as his negotiating partner, R. was sure he would never cross the second; and when he did so in signing the Oslo agreement, R. simply could not believe that he would go on to the third; and when he did so in ignoring Arafat's violations of the agreement, R. still maintained that he would never go any further; and when he did so in tolerating PLO political activity in Jerusalem and in declaring his willingness to withdraw from the Golan Heights, R. finally gave up. He has not joined the extremists who denounce Rabin as a traitor, but short of that, R. has become the most passionate critic of Rabin I know in Israel.

Having lost his faith in Rabin, R. now relies on reality. That is, instead of insisting at every stage that Rabin will never do whatever Rabin then proceeds to do, he now insists that the peace process will founder on the rock of obstacles in the real world that it keeps ignoring or wishing away. At this moment it is Hebron, which has become the final sticking point in "Oslo 2," the agreement under which Israeli forces are to withdraw from most of the West Bank. R. is certain that the proposed arrangements for protecting the Jewish settlers in Hebron cannot possibly work even if the Palestinians accept them, which they never will. Commenting on the announcement in the press that Rabin and Peres are planning to visit Hebron this afternoon, he says, "Good, let them go and see for themselves and then they will realize how crazy this arrangement is." In a gavotte that we have danced so often that the steps have become second nature to us both, I retort that they will see only what they wish to see, and that if the Palestinians persist in refusing to accept their proposals, they will advance other proposals that the Palestinians will be willing to accept. Nothing, I say for the hundredth time, will be permitted to derail this train from the track until it reaches the end of the line.

But what about Jerusalem? Time was when I felt certain that no Israeli government would ever acquiesce in the redivision of Jerusalem, and on this point even R. still has faith in Rabin. It is a

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highly tremulous faith, to be sure, and it is undermined a little more every day by the government's de-facto toleration of Palestinian political activity in East Jerusalem—activity which constitutes a violation of the Oslo agreement—while pretending to forbid it.

As for me, I have no faith left to be undermined. At the ceremonies the other night inaugurating a yearlong celebration of the 3000th anniversary of Jerusalem as the Jewish capital, Rabin proclaimed that "undivided Jerusalem is the heart of the Jewish people and the capital of the state of Israel. Undivided Jerusalem is ours. . . .There is no state of Israel without Jerusalem and no peace without Jerusalem undivided." Instead of bucking me up, these words put a chill in my blood. They were so reminiscent in their firmness and confidence of other declarations he had made in the past that I could not help seeing in them the last of the "red lines" he would eventually cross, all the while pretending (perhaps even to himself) that he was doing no such thing.

The way this trick would be pulled off would be through some form of "shared sovereignty" under which Jerusalem would technically remain a single city. There would be no barriers or barbed-wire fences as in the years between 1948 and 1967, but two different nations would call Jerusalem their capital and two different flags would fly over the two halves of the city. Already, indeed, foreign dignitaries pay official visits to the offices of the Palestinian Authority in East Jerusalem while the countries they represent still refuse to recognize the city as the capital of Israel.

These countries include the United States, whose current President declared during his campaign for office (in words reminiscent of Rabin's): "I recognize Jerusalem as an undivided city and the eternal capital of Israel." Yet Bill Clinton's ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, could not even bring himself to attend the opening ceremonies of Jerusalem 3000. In contrast to the European ambassadors who refused to participate on the ground that these ceremonies were a political event, Indyk claimed that they were a cultural event and therefore sent his cultural attaché to represent him.

This is the same Martin Indyk who, as the head of a think tank in Washington, wrote a paper advocating that the American embassy be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Now, with the tacit approval of the Israeli government—such is the Orwellian world that the peace process has created—he lobbies against this move as harmful to the negotiations, and it is a good bet that he will wind up lobbying for shared sovereignty when it turns out that the Palestinians will accept nothing less. It is an equally good bet, moreover, that Rabin and Peres will go along with an arrangement of this kind rather than derail the policy to which they have committed their political fortunes in the present and their standing in the eyes of Jewish history.

Thursday, September 7

WE TAKE Nani, who has thus far spent more time hanging out with her adoring Israeli cousins than seeing the sights of Jerusalem, to the Western Wall. It is a brilliantly sunny day and so hot that our visit lasts only a short time, but still long enough for me to catch the tail end of a bar mitzvah that has just been conducted here. At first I am surprised to see this happening on a weekday, but then I remember that, since the essence of a bar mitzvah is calling the new adult for the first time to the Torah, the ceremony can be held on any day the Torah scroll is read publicly, which in a normal week means Monday and Thursday as well as Saturday.

This is not the bar mitzvah I have come to Jerusalem for, and ordinarily I might not have paid much attention. But I find myself fascinated by the sight of a family of Oriental Jews who seem so alien to me (on closer inspection they turn out to be immigrants from India) engaged in this totally familiar ritual—a familiarity which includes not only the prayers and procedures of the service but even the custom of women pelting the participants with pieces of candy from behind the barrier that, in accordance with Orthodox practice, separates them from the men.

Only the other day I had described to a delighted Ruthie the wicked fastballs that were hurled from the balcony of the Orthodox synagogue of my own childhood by wild-eyed crones who seized on every bar mitzvah as a wonderful opportunity to engage in a little aggression against the male sex. I had thought this custom was purely East European, but now I discover that Oriental Jews practice it too.

The reason these people seem alien to me is not that they are dark-skinned. It is because they do not conform to the atavistic idea of a Jew that neither age nor experience has succeeded in dislodging from my mind and that catches me unawares at unguarded moments like this. As a child, I had the same trouble with German Jews—people who act like that, and who can't even speak Yiddish, are Jews?—and because most of the Gentiles with

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whom I grew up were Italian, for a long time I was simply unable to believe that there could be such a thing as an Italian Jew: the very term was an oxymoron.

Now, to confuse and complicate matters even further, I notice that the rabbi presiding at this bar mitzvah does conform perfectly to the stereotype of which I have never been able to rid myself. Though by all appearances from Morocco, he is dressed in the traditional black garb of an East European Hasid (a clothing style that dates from 18th-century Poland). And not only does he look like my idea of a real Jew, he prays like one, racing at the usual breakneck speed through the blessing he is pronouncing over the head of the bar-mitzvah boy. (Later, I remark to my wife how interesting it was to discover that Oriental Jews pray just as fast as East Europeans. "Naturally," she grins. "All Jews do. The services are so long that if they didn't, they would be at least 500 years behind.")

And so here I am in front of the Western Wall watching a Moroccan rabbi in the costume of a Polish Hasid speeding through an ancient Hebrew blessing over the head of an Indian bar-mitzvah boy being pelted with candy by women dressed in saris while speaking modern Hebrew—and it is evidently all too much for me. The Jews are too much for me, the mystery and wonder of their ingathering in this country are too much for me, their diversity and their unity as a people are too much for me, and to my amazement, and embarrassment, I feel tears coming to my eyes and spilling over onto my cheeks.

Friday, September 8

WHEN I see B., another of the handful of Israeli professors who are not on the Left, he wants to know how we American neoconservative intellectuals "did it." How, that is, did we manage to challenge the hegemony of the Left in the world of ideas and not only survive but prevail? His question is not academic or motivated by historical curiosity. What he is looking for is practical guidance that he hopes he can apply to the situation in Israel.

I tell him that, beginning in the late 60's, we American refugees from the Left mounted as powerful a critique as we could of the ideas and assumptions in which we had lost faith; simultaneously we developed an alternative perspective that was both internally coherent and in tune with the available evidence. Where foreign policy in particular was concerned, this meant challenging the anti-American notion that the United States and the Soviet Union were morally equivalent and the correlative revisionist view that the cold war could only be settled by a conciliatory accommodation with Moscow.

Obviously, an analogous job needs to be done here, where the leftist interpretation of the Arab war against Israel bears an uncanny resemblance to the leftist interpretation of the cold war that came to prominence in the wake of Vietnam. But I warn him that a campaign against this interpretation, while absolutely necessary, is not sufficient. It will take a major crisis to turn things around. For us in America, it was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 which overnight convinced almost everyone that our analysis of Soviet intentions was right and that the anti-anti-Communists who had been claiming that the USSR was no longer expansionist, if in truth it had ever been, were wrong. If the structure of ideas we had built up over the years had not been in place and readily available for explaining what had just happened much more convincingly than the Left was able to do, Afghanistan might not have had so enormous a political effect. But if Afghanistan, or something like it, had not occurred, we would not have won the political battle even though we had already demolished our opponents in the realm of ideas.

This account only succeeds in deepening B.'s gloom—and mine as well. For without saying another word, we both understand that the only "Afghanistan" that can be expected here is terrorism and war. Which means that a very high price will have to be paid to persuade the shapers of opinion in Israel that Rabin's "separation" is as much a pipe dream as Peres's "new Middle East"; that the Palestinians will not settle permanently for a state confined to the West Bank and Gaza; that they, and the Arab world in general, are still intent on eradicating the Jewish state; and that they have changed only in shifting to a different way of pursuing that objective.

In the past they put their faith in direct military assault, but this approach having repeatedly failed, they have at last come around to the strategy of "stages" first proposed many years ago by President Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia. It is a shift that has paid off more handsomely than anyone could have expected. The Palestinians are now well on their way to achieving the first stage: a state of their own on land wrested from the Israelis by political maneuvering (with a little help from the *intifada*). There are various possibilities for stages

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two and three, but in the end the idea is to launch the *jihad*, the holy war against Israel, that even today Arafat (who sings a different tune when he addresses non-Arab audiences) keeps invoking in his speeches to his own people.

He can do this with impunity, knowing that the Israeli and American governments will dismiss such talk as nothing more than a rhetorical bone thrown to the Islamic fundamentalists of Hamas. He also knows that they will forgive him for it, even though it serves to incite the very terrorists he has pledged to control. And he knows that in the last resort the two governments will even try to deny that he makes such speeches. Thus, when a videotape of one of these speeches was shown in Israel recently, Peres immediately declared that the tape was probably a forgery and only backed down when Arafat himself admitted that it was genuine. But this admission cost him nothing, and within a week or so he was back saying the very same things again in another speech in Gaza.

Saturday, September 9

THE DAY of Noam's bar mitzvah, the day for which we mainly came to Israel, has arrived. At 8 A.M. we amble over to a small Orthodox synagogue in the Baka'a section of Jerusalem where Ruthie and her family live. The bar mitzvah will take place in this synagogue even though the family does not belong to the congregation and is not religiously observant.

Ruthie grew up on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and she often makes mordant jokes about the sociological resemblances between the place from which she fled and the one in which she has landed. Like the Upper West Side of her pre-Israel life, Baka'a is full of writers, artists, academics, and journalists who are successful enough to afford its relatively expensive apartments and who are, if anything, even more solidly left-wing than the people among whom she was born and raised. It was from people like this—or at any rate from their political opinions and attitudes—that Ruthie ran away, only to wind up among them again.

Today, however, you would never take her for a Baka'a woman. In respectful deference to the Orthodox idea of female decorum, she has put on a long skirt, a blouse that covers her arms, and a kerchief around her head. This costume has a transforming effect. Ruthie is a beauty, and no matter what she is wearing she looks much younger than her age. But seeing her in this get-up, you would never believe she is old enough to be the mother of a thirteen-year-old, or that she could be the same person who dispenses sage and witty advice to troubled Israelis every Thursday in her "Dear Ruthie" column in the *Jerusalem Post*. More likely you would take her for the prettiest girl in a religious settlement on the West Bank.

If Baka'a reminds Ruthie of her childhood in Manhattan, the synagogue in which Noam's bar mitzvah is being celebrated instantly carries me back to my childhood in Brooklyn. It is smaller than the *shul* in Brownsville I attended every Saturday more than a half-century ago and where my own bar mitzvah was held, and the women here are segregated behind a barrier rather than in a balcony (the one from which those hard-candy fastballs were hurled). But the atmosphere is eerily reminiscent of that *shul*. Indeed, the men here are praying—at, I need hardly mention, breakneck speed—in the selfsame inflections that could be heard back there.

This is stranger than it might seem, for they are all Israelis who, when speaking Hebrew in their daily lives, use the standard Sephardi pronunciation. Yet in reciting their prayers, most of them adopt, or revert to, an Ashkenazi accent, the accent of the East European Diaspora. As a result, they sound not like Israelis but exactly like the kind of congregation in Brooklyn of which I was a member in days of yore. Perhaps this is their way of maintaining a distinction between Hebrew as a holy language and Hebrew as a vehicle of secular life. Or perhaps they suspect that there is truth in the joke about God cocking His ear to an earthly congregation praying in Sephardi accents and complaining to the angels—in Yiddish, of course—that He cannot, for the life of Him, make head or tail of what these Jews are trying to tell Him ("*Vos far a loshn redn zey dortn?*").

When, however, Noam is called to the Torah—to the accompaniment, I am relieved to see, of the traditional shower of candy from the women's section—he sounds exactly like the *sabra* he is. His part is a difficult one even for an Israeli kid, whose native Hebrew bears about as much resemblance to biblical Hebrew as contemporary American English does to Shakespeare. But he chants it flawlessly and with the insouciant confidence that used to be characteristic of the *sabra* and that now seems to have succumbed, like so much else, to "normalization."

NOAM IS the fourth of our ten grandchildren to have gone through this ceremony in less than two years, and it gets me every time. If I was

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taken aback when I felt tears welling up the other day at the bar mitzvah of the Indian boy at the Wall, I fully expected them to come up on me today, just as they had for Noam's three cousins before him; and so they do. Never much given to weeping in my younger days, in my incipient dotage I have become something of a blubberer, though for the most part the sappiness is brought out only by my grandchildren. Over any or all of these ten wondrous creatures I can weep at the drop of a hat.

Sometimes I weep with joy and pride and sometimes I weep with worry and anguish. But just now I am weeping with anxiety over the four here in Jerusalem. For all their "normality," for all their easy commerce with McDonald's and Michael Jackson and O.J. Simpson, they are Israelis and I cannot prevent myself from believing that they are living in a condition of terrible danger. When I told one of my Israeli friends that from the minute I landed here I have been feeling slightly ill, he replied without missing a beat, "Well, of course, this country makes you sick." He was right; it does. It makes me sick with frustration and apprehension as I watch it careering toward a major disaster that nothing seems able to head off and no one seems able to prevent. And there sit Noam and Alon and Boaz and Avital—Noam who flings himself ardently at me whenever we meet or part; Alon who, over my protests, will press his precious fountain pen upon me tomorrow as a farewell gift; Boaz ("the sweet thug" to his grandparents) who will refuse to say goodbye except by punching me angrily as we leave; and Avital (the imperious little "Queen of Jerusalem") who addresses and refers to me always, in English, as "Beloved Grandpa."

Intellectuals would usually rather be right than President—indeed, would rather be right than anything. But not this one, not this time. Weeping silently at the sight of my grandson becoming a full-fledged Jew, I pray to God that I am wildly mistaken in fearing what I fear for him and for all Israel. As I have done over and over again in the last three years, I find myself, here in this *shul* in Jerusalem, praying that those who see peace and harmony and prosperity ahead for this country will for once in their political lives turn out to be right, and that those of us cursed with visions of disaster and war will be granted the blessing of an outcome that proves us utterly wrong.

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The Man Who Wrote Too Much

Joseph Epstein

Milan Kundera, the Czech novelist, has spoken of fiction as a great European invention for the discovery of truth. But what kinds of truth can fiction be said to discover? And how does it go about making such discoveries? These large, not to say bulky, questions are at the heart of Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, a vast work whose first sections began to appear in Germany in the early 1930's and which has now been newly translated into English in a handsome edition that includes many of the author's notes.*

The Man Without Qualities has frequently been linked with *Ulysses* and *Remembrance of Things Past* as one of the great masterworks of modern literature. But, despite its monumentality—it is nearly 1,800 pages long—and its large cast of characters, it does not otherwise much resemble the novels of either James Joyce or Marcel Proust. Musil's assumptions, psychology, style, aesthetic goals are each distinctly and significantly different—and not only from Joyce and Proust, but from just about every other modern master one is likely to encounter.

"Yop, I botched it," Ezra Pound is reported to have said of his own vastly ambitious poetic work, *The Cantos*, and one may wonder if Robert Musil, who worked on his book for more than twenty years, did not go to his grave feeling similarly. The literary historian Henry Hatfield has called *The Man Without Qualities* "a great book but not a successful work of art." The critic J. P. Stern puts a slightly different spin on the same paradoxical judgment: "To the question whether what [Musil] has written is a great novel there is, I think, only one answer: it is great, but it is not a novel." I myself would say that Musil wrote neither a great work of art nor a great book but is the author of modern literature's most impressive failure, which is itself no small achievement.

The first bald, brutal fact about *The Man Without Qualities* is that it is unfinished. The novel is unfinished not in the way of Schubert's great symphony or of works that require another draft or a final polish, but so substantially unfinished, despite its immense length, that one cannot claim to be certain what its major drift, or direction, or even denouement (if Musil had one in mind) was finally meant to have been.

Some critics have attempted to make a virtue of this deficiency. The novelist and memoirist Elias Canetti once claimed that Musil's novel is endless in two senses: "immortal as well as unfinished." In a review of the new translation in the *New Yorker*, George Steiner has taken this a step further by remarking that "there is something strangely right about the 'interminability' of *The Man Without Qualities*."

Is that so—or did Musil, Pound-like, botch it? Why was he unable to complete his novel? Is it possible that *The Man Without Qualities* is a book

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that, in a fundamental way, badly misunderstands, and hence sadly misuses, the art of fiction itself?

Born in Austria in 1880, Robert Musil was of that remarkable generation of German-language writers—often referred to as the "Generation of 1905"—who came into their literary maturity in the decade before World War I. Franz Kafka, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, and Hermann Broch were the leading figures in this generation.

Musil's family was, in terms we would recognize today, upper-middle-class academic, of Austrian and part-Czech descent. His father was a professor of mechanical engineering at the Technical Institute at Brno. Of this man, Musil would say that "he believed nothing and offered nothing as a surrogate" for belief. But if, in his father, intellection predominated over feeling, in Musil's mother nearly the reverse obtained: she was a woman of unruly emotions, whom her son once likened to a pretty woman with messy hair. One of her male admirers actually moved into the household when Musil was a boy and remained there for years.

Musil grew up, as David S. Luft, one of his best critics, writes, "in an entirely secular atmosphere, virtually untouched by religion." One of the results of this upbringing was to leave him with a spiritual hunger that neither philosophy nor finally, it appears, literature could satisfy. At eleven, he was sent off to military school, first in Burgenland in eastern Austria, and then in Moravia—the latter school was also attended, and detested, by Rilke—and for a time he planned a career as a professional soldier. At seventeen he dropped this notion to study engineering. From there he went on to philosophy, logic, and experimental psychology.

Although Musil is identified with Vienna—the scene of *The Man Without Qualities*—he came into his intellectual maturity in Berlin. There he cut a minor figure in the salon of Paul Cassirer, the brother of the philosopher Ernst Cassirer. He wrote his dissertation, at the University of Berlin, on the physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach, published scientific papers, and had to his credit the invention of a chromameter (a color wheel for use in optical experiments). He remained dependent on his parents until 1911, when he was past thirty and already married to Martha Macovaldi, a partly Jewish woman, seven years his elder, who had been married twice before and had young children.

Engineering, science, and philosophy all having proved inadequate, Musil at last settled on literature as a career. There is no evidence that he read widely in fiction, though he is said to have admired Stendhal, no doubt for his coolness and lucidity, and to have disliked Joyce. As a literary intellectual (Luft reports), he much preferred Nietzsche to Wagner, favoring the clarity of the former over the darkness of the latter. In his student years in Berlin, Musil had been swept up by artistic modernism and its ideals, and so he would remain. "Since my youth," he wrote in his diary, "I have looked upon the aesthetic as the ethical."

Although Musil would die broke, thinking himself a neglected writer, his first novel, *Young Törless* (1906), received a generous response. In Berlin, Alfred Kerr, one of the leading critics of the day, called it "a book that will last." Other reviewers lined up to praise it, some as an important generational work. Much later, Erich Kahler would cite the book as one of the first existential texts in modern German literature.

Like a good deal that Musil wrote, *Young Törless* has a strong if not a direct basis in autobiography. The novel is set in a military school, not so different from the one Musil himself attended in Moravia. In it Törless, taken up by two older, aristocratic youths, is maneuvered into helping them bully a younger boy who has been caught stealing from his fellow students. This boy, Basini, is put through hell by the two older boys; in Törless, he arouses both disgust and sexual excitement.

Less an indictment of the cruelty of military schools than a novel about the psychology of adolescence, *Young Törless* is even more a portrait of a rather peculiar artist as a young man. Törless is a premature artist, groping his way: "It's as if I had one extra sense, one more than the others have, but not completely developed, a sense that's there and makes itself noticed, but doesn't function." In the book, Törless attempts to understand his own irrational desires and the no less irrational arrangements that pass for adult behavior. As so often in Musil—as so often in so many writers who worked in the atmosphere of turn-of-the-century Austria-Hungary—sexual excitement jump-starts elaborate mental activity. In this instance, the activity being recorded has to do with how people think, with the bridges between thought and experience, with the intuition of artists, and with the link between the sexual and the artistic impulse.

That is a lot for a slender novel, written by a man of twenty-five, to bear, and one tends to admire the book's intellectual earnestness rather more than one takes pleasure in reading it. Though it shows every sign of an emerging talent, *Young Törless* is also pervaded by an airlessness and the

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less than enticing feeling of ambiguity that comes from irresolution in art.

AS MIGHT be expected of one trained in science and philosophy, Musil's fiction was generally set into motion by ideas. Yet there was one distinct body of ideas in the air that he never took at all seriously: psychoanalytic theory. Vladimir Nabokov's characterization of Freudian psychoanalysis as the application of Greek myths to private parts was something with which Musil would have agreed. Psychoanalysis, he wrote, took the individual, confused and stunted, and instructed him that "all he needs is courage and healthy gonads." This was very far indeed from Musil's own notion of either the problem or the solution to the complexities of life in the modern world.

The central problem of modernity was, for Musil, the state of fragmentation in which men and women found themselves. As for the solution, it had to do with somehow bringing the intellect, with its capacity for concentration and precision, into alignment with the soul. "Everything which is currently expressed by the word soul one does not understand with the intellect," Musil lamented, "in the way in which one always understands scientific philosophy with the necessary concentration." In *The Man Without Qualities*, Musil has his hero propose that the Austrian government set up a World Secretariat for Precision and Soul, and *Precision and Soul* is the English title of a volume of Musil's essays.

The word "soul" seems to mean many things in Musil, ranging from one's animal energies and appetites, to one's unconscious, to that which cannot be understood by anyone else, to one's religious essence. Inexact, even irritating, though this may be, what Musil essentially argued is that intellect and soul, mind and spirit, would have to be brought into conjunction if the fragmentation of modern life was ever to be healed, and later he would claim just this as his own artistic program. In an essay entitled "Mind and Experience," Musil noted that "those who wanted to introduce intellect into literature could not think. They couldn't because they thought in airy words whose content lacked any empirical restraint." By finding a way to join art and intellect, he planned to cut through what he saw as the impotence of each.

It would be a hard slog. In the years between the publication of *Young Törless* and World War I, during which he served four years as an officer in the Austrian army, Musil produced two plays and five stories, along with a quantity of drama criticism, essays, and literary criticism. None would give anything like a hint of the vastness of his artistic ambitions, though evidence of his subtlety and depth is unarguably on display in the stories. One of them, "The Lady from Portugal," is a mythic tale about a family of Teutonic barons who select brides from far-off lands. In it, Musil demonstrates his ability to deploy a beautifully paced narrative that enraptures the reader in the customary and timeworn way of fiction. He can do death scenes, he displays descriptive power, he can strike the persuasive philosophical note.

Yet, though it was available to him, Musil seems to have rejected this sort of traditional writing. "What I value in art," says a character in his story, "The Perfecting of a Love," "is the subtlety of the right ending, which consoles us for the humdrum of everyday life." But we are not supposed much to value the views of this character, and Musil himself did not purvey such consolation. With the exception of "Tonka," which retells Musil's own difficult and ultimately hopeless love affair with a woman below his own social class—"How little one knows what one knows," says the narrator, "or wants what one wants"—Musil's stories are chiefly investigations of psychological states. They also foreshadow the core concerns of *The Man Without Qualities*: the loneliness of the solitary mind ("all she knew was that at some point in time something had come between her and life, leaving a barrier"); the paradoxical conditions of emotion ("she knew the wonderful, dangerous intensification of feeling that came with lying and cheating in love"); and what can only be called flirting with God ("She said: 'I have a vague notion of what people might be to each other. . . . What you sometimes call God is like the thing I mean'").

MUSIL HIMSELF must have grown impatient with the extent of his progress. After World War I, he worked for the Austrian Foreign Ministry as a press secretary of sorts, and following this he was employed as a scientific adviser to the Austrian War Ministry. From 1922 on, he wrote as a free-lance. He apparently traveled nowhere without his wife, who is said to have taken over all the financial and other practical details of their lives. As with just about every Viennese intellectual or artist one has ever heard or read about, Musil suffered no shortage of neuroses (something in the water, or in the ideas, no doubt). He did not handle money; he preferred not to shake hands. He was a heavy smoker who practiced a regular physical workout regimen.

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Elias Canetti reports that Musil had no small talk: in the best scientific manner, he felt that a conversation "should start from something precise and aim at something precise." Canetti adds:

> For devious ways he felt contempt and hatred. But he did not aim at simplicity; he had an unerring instinct for the inadequacy of the simple and was capable of shattering it with a detailed portrait. His mind was too richly endowed, too active and acute to content itself with simplicity.

Such a man, such a mind, found what might have seemed its perfect project, its ideal objective correlative, in the vast novel that was to be *The Man Without Qualities*. A study of Viennese society, an analysis of the malaise of modern man, an attempt to penetrate the wellsprings of human nature—it was as if Musil had been in training all his early life for writing this novel. He set to work on it not long after the end of the war, and essentially labored on it for the remainder of his days. In the end, the novel defeated him, not only aesthetically but in other ways as well.

In a foreword to an earlier English edition of the first volume of *The Man Without Qualities* (1952), Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, its translators, recount the sad publishing history of Musil's would-be masterwork. In Europe the first volume appeared in 1931, during the Depression; still, it sold 8,000 copies and was a *succès d'estime*. Publication of the second volume was badly timed, coinciding with the rise to power of the Nazis. Musil did not permit the third volume to come out, withdrawing the first twenty chapters when they were already in galley proof. Whenever and wherever he traveled, three suitcases went with him, containing the manuscript and notes for later chapters. Talk about a stone around one's neck.

With no money coming in, Musil was forced to rely on the patronage of friends of literature who formed a Musil Society; its members, chiefly professionals and businessmen, made quarterly payments to help support him, though not in very grand style. As most members of the society were Jews, Hitler's racial policies had the additional effect of putting an end to Musil's financial backing. In 1938, he emigrated to Switzerland, where he continued to add to his out-of-control book until the very morning in 1942 when, after a good session at the writing table in his garden in Geneva, he died. The expression on his face is said to have been a mixture of mockery and astonishment—in some ways the perfect death mask for a novelist. Eight people, reportedly, attended his funeral.

Always treat a work of art like a prince, an old proverb has it—that is, let it speak to you first. I take this to mean that it is best to confront a work of art directly, without any introductions, critical aids, or the rest of the contemporary apparatus of literary understanding. But in the case of *The Man Without Qualities* the trouble is that the work's reputation as a modern classic precedes it, and this reputation has only been further burnished by the enthusiastic critical reception accorded the new English version. So impressive have been some of the essays occasioned by its appearance that one wonders, in fact, whether Robert Musil may not be one of those writers—Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Elias Canetti—who are rather more interesting to read about than actually to read.

Of the two possible ways of reading *The Man Without Qualities*, the first and perhaps more sympathetic is to recognize its brilliance, be grateful that we have what we do of it, explain away its weaknesses where possible, and let it go at that. The second, which I propose, is to attempt to fathom why Musil could not finish this, his life's work, the book he seems to have been born to write yet did not come anywhere near close to completing. What is even sadder, there is good reason to believe that had he lived another twenty years, he still would not have been able to finish the monster to which he had given birth.

The Man Without Qualities begins in August 1913, one year before Europe will be drawn into war. Its protagonist, Ulrich (his last name is never given), a man of thirty-two, a former military officer, a mathematician of some power, a man attractive to women, and, most pertinently, the possessor of a philosophical temperament matched perhaps only by his detachment, has decided to take a year off, in effect a "vacation from life," to get his bearings. But the city he chooses for this purpose, Vienna, is not the perfect place, for of all cities in Europe at the time it might well be the most uncentered, unhinged, unreal. (The satirist Karl Kraus was able to keep his magazine, *Die Fackel*, afloat chiefly by attacking the madhouse quality of Viennese intellectual life, and he never ran out of material.)

The ostensible premise of *The Man Without Qualities* is built on a sociopolitical swamp. The swamp is the notion, held by many of the novel's chief characters, that life in Austria, with its empire and emperor, will go on, pretty much business-as-usual. We know, of course, that only a year later in historical time, in August 1914, Franz Ferdinand, the Archduke and presumptive heir to the throne

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of Franz Joseph, will be assassinated, an event that will set off World War I, and by that war's end the Austro-Hungarian empire will be finished, the monarchy replaced by a republic, the class system and intricate European balance of power done for. But in 1913, the scene and setting of Musil's novel, everyone, though perhaps a little nervous in the service, is still playing let's pretend, assuming the best, *mit schlag*.

In this atmosphere, a rich muddle characterized by only a slight apprehension of decline but no genuine belief in a fall, the intellectually ruthless Ulrich attempts to find a way. But a way toward what? Early in the first volume, Ulrich is mugged on the streets of Vienna, and the next morning his mind turns to the complexities of a society in which the violent and the civilized live side by side. "It is the old story of the contradictions, the inconsistency, and the imperfections of life," writes Musil. But Ulrich himself has no tolerance for contradictions and inconsistencies; instead, he feels the need to work through them to discover explanations, solutions, answers.

As we soon learn, however, that is almost the only need he does feel. For along with his desire to get to the bottom of everything, Ulrich coolly distances himself from what the rest of the world is pleased to call reality. He cannot, Musil tells us, summon up "a sense of reality even in relation to himself." From this it follows that nothing is understood by him as stable, everything is open to question, standard motives for human conduct are viewed comically, and the world is seen as through a series of funhouse mirrors. Ulrich, in short, is of the type of the intellectual, but the intellectual taken to the highest power: unaffiliated, utterly skeptical, without any loyalties except to those ideas that hold up under the deepest scrutiny—of which, one must immediately add, none does.

From Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* through Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, the socially detached, spiritually deracinated intellectual has been a recurring type in literature and in life. As a secondary character in Musil's novel says of Ulrich: "There are millions of them nowadays. It's the human type produced by our time." This chapter also nicely nails the instability of vision of our man without qualities:

> When he is angry, something in him laughs. When he is sad, he is up to something. When something moves him, he turns against it. He'll always see a good side to every bad action. What he thinks of anything will always depend on some possible context—nothing is, to him, what it is; everything is subject to change, in flux, part of a whole, of an infinite number of wholes presumably adding up to a superwhole that, however, he knows nothing about.

This man without qualities, this pure type of the intellectual, would be really quite hopeless if he were not so clever and entertaining. And Musil, speaking through Ulrich, can be spectacularly clever and delightfully entertaining. On such subjects as the democratization of genius—so that one speaks, these days, of an advertising or a basketball genius, or even the genius of a racehorse; or the strange way in which presumably new cultural eras arrive (so that "finally one has no way of knowing whether the world has really grown worse, or oneself merely older"); or the phenomenon of those who practice "the profession of being the next generation," Ulrich/Musil is dazzling. Reading the first hundred or so pages of *The Man Without Qualities*, watching Musil set up the furniture for all that is to follow, one cannot mistake that one is in the presence of a superior mind and a major talent. One also senses that Musil himself is writing more expansively than ever before. Wit, till now not in strong evidence in his fiction, gets free play. His lens has widened; windows have been opened. The only question, again, is to what end it will all conduce.

INITIALLY, ONE is led to believe that the end is satire—lovely, devastating, utterly destructive satire. Clearly, satire seems intended when Ulrich meets a cousin, a woman of whom he is enamored and to whom he gives the classical name Diotima. It is she who arranges for him to become secretary to something called the Committee for the Parallel Campaign. This has been organized for the purpose of celebrating, five years hence, the 70th anniversary of the rule of Franz Joseph, and the reason the committee's project is "parallel" is that it is in a natural rivalry with the German campaign to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the rule of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

The Parallel Campaign is itself sheer PR, but the people organizing it have not yet reached the stage of cynicism that successful public relations requires; in other words, they half-believe their own nonsense. The campaign thus functions as a brilliant device, allowing Musil (by way of Ulrich) to view Viennese society through the complex prism of its various social classes, institutions, and characteristic types, the list of which includes aristocrats, young radicals, businessmen, Jews, false poets, military men, social climbers, and the rest.

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And not Viennese society alone. Our man without qualities views, with proper ironic detachment, the last days of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the *state* without qualities. This was a state, as the historian Lewis Namier once put it, that "did not exist except in reminiscences of the past and pious hopes for the future," and that "displayed more frontier and less coherence than any other state in Europe." With its smug aristocrats, its middle classes encased in a "corset of culture," its pretensions to military power, it has, in the pages of this novel, doom written all over it. Glut and confusion rule the day; integrity in such circumstances is not so much impossible as beside the point. "There's no longer a whole man confronting a whole world," says Ulrich, "only a human something moving about in a general culture-medium."

In this "general culture-medium," the hardest question is the question of reality: what is it, where is it, who claims to have grasped it, does it truly exist? As it turns out, anyone who feels he has the answers to these questions is in for the greatest mockery of all. The true fools are those who think they know something.

Perhaps the greatest fool of all is one of the novel's most interesting characters: Paul Arnheim, a German-Jewish industrialist of philosophical bent whom Musil is said to have modeled on Walter Rathenau, the Foreign Minister in the Weimar Republic who was assassinated in Berlin in 1922. In the novel, Arnheim joins the Parallel Campaign to give it a more international flavor, and also becomes a competitor of sorts with Ulrich for Diotima's affections. Apart from sexual rivalrousness, what Ulrich despises about Arnheim is his certainty about how the world is not only meant to be but actually works. Arnheim is a global explainer who always finds time to look after his own business first.

Alas, because of the unfinished state of *The Man Without Qualities*, Arnheim, a delicious character, drops out, as do many other characters, subplots, and promising threads. Most frustrating in its inconclusiveness is the story of another central character, a mad sex murderer named Christian Moosbrugger. Ulrich and others are obsessed with the case of Moosbrugger, who figures alternately for them as a martyr, a monster, and someone in whom the civilized and the rational can indulge their fascination with the barbaric and the irrational. One character—herself quite mad—describes Moosbrugger as "Nietzsche in the shape of a sinner." But as to what, precisely, Musil himself meant Moosbrugger to signify, this remains a mystery. As Burton Pike, the editorial consultant to the new English version, puts it, he "is so ambiguously presented that any clearly symbolic interpretation of his character is impossible."

This, unfortunately, could be said of numerous aspects of *The Man Without Qualities*. Many promises, in the literary sense which Chekhov intended when he said that a shotgun placed over the mantel in the first act of a play ought to be fired by the third, are made yet not really kept in this sprawling work. *The Man Without Qualities* is a novel filled with brilliant scenes, patches, observations, and aphorisms, usually bitter: "That one is not loved as one deserves is the sorrow of all old maids of both sexes." "When the father is poor the sons love money; when Papa has money, the sons love mankind." "Isn't it strange that almost every single person knows himself least of all and loves himself most of all?" And, a thought to prevent one from falling asleep at night: "This freedom of will is man's ability to do voluntarily what he wishes involuntarily."

Musil's penchant for the aphorism is related to his admiration for the essay. Time and again he stops his novel for diverse reflections of a kind more natural to that form, though generally without its successful sense of a safe landing. The novel even contains a brief essay *on* the essay, where the reader is told that it is "the unique and unalterable form assumed by a man's inner life in decisive thought." Of Musil's essayism, Pike rightly notes: "I would say that it generally arises from a feeling on the part of the author . . . that a fictional vehicle is an inadequate means of presenting all that he is trying to say."

The English critic V.S. Pritchett has defended *The Man Without Qualities* by saying that in it "the habit of intellectual analysis is not stultifying to drama, movement, or invention, but enhances them"—but Pritchett was writing before the publication of this, the more complete edition. It is true that early in the novel, the essayistic element is fairly well integrated with the story. In the new material, however, essayism looms larger, all but takes over, so that at the close of yet another discourse on, say, the precise definition of emotion, one feels almost as if the story were an interruption and that one ought really to be getting back to yet another longueur.

The reason the essayistic element begins to take over is that Musil has begun to lose control of his novel and to steer it in an entirely new direction—on "a journey of no return," as J.P. Stern has ob-

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served. In the third part, he in fact all but abandons his account of the Parallel Campaign, with its many interesting characters and possibilities, and begins to tell a love story, although one which also never comes to anything like true fruition. It is a story of incest, of Ulrich and his sister Agathe's love for each other; it is, if one has a taste for the mythical, also the story of Isis, the deity of ancient Egypt, and her husband Osiris; it is a story of hermaphroditic completeness; and it is, in a sense no novelist would wish to hear pronounced about his work, quite incredible.

When Musil takes up this story line, he shifts from analysis of reality to the search, through mysticism, for a higher plane of morality, a second state of being, a new union between the world and the self. This search ends in muddle, boredom, and emptiness. Very late in the novel, Musil writes:

> The blows of confused and anarchic ideas that Ulrich received every day, and the movement of these thoughts in an imprudent but clearly palpable direction, had in fact gradually swept him up, and the only thing that still differentiated his life from that of the insane was a consciousness of his situation, which he could interrupt by an effort.

As so often, Musil appears to be speaking here quite as much about himself and his intractable novel as about his protagonist. Poor Musil, he must have sensed that his readers would not be similarly "swept up" by the ideas he had given to Ulrich to discover; nor would they, even by an effort, be able to sustain interest in a by now all but interminable novel, if novel it could any longer be called.

Musil's own dubiety about his project seems to have grown greater with time. A note printed toward the end of this edition reads: "Does greatness never lie in content? In a way of ordering things?" Another, a self-invocation, reads: "Dramatize! Make all this present!" Endlessly revising, turning out countless drafts, withdrawing sections at the last moment before print, rethinking, reworking, devising divergences in plot, coming up with different endings—all that brilliance, all that literary talent, all for nearly nothing.

In a very sensible chapter on Musil in *The Dear Purchase*, his study of modern German literature, J.P. Stern writes: "With Musil, the tug-of-war between philosophical ambition and literary gifts is never resolved; on the contrary, it is exacerbated by his passionate conviction that 'the only function of a writer is to produce a masterpiece.'" Thomas Mann and Marcel Proust, among modern novelists, were able to get the literary and the philosophical in the right balance. But Musil, more the trained philosopher than either, could not.

The literary problem that is at the center of *The Man Without Qualities* was touched upon by Musil himself—before he began writing his novel—in an essay entitled "Sketch of What the Writer Knows" (1918). There, he set up two realms—they are not quite methods—of thinking, which he gave the inelegant names of "ratoid" and "nonratoid." The former mode works from cause to effect, with proven facts, toward the creation of rules, laws, and concepts. The thinking of the scientist, psychologist, philosopher is ratoid. By contrast, Musil goes on, "if the ratoid is the domination of the 'rule with exceptions,' the nonratoid area is that of the dominance of the exceptions over the rule."

The imaginative writer is the nonratoid thinker *par excellence*, concerned with values and valuations, ethics and aesthetic relationships. He steps in where "facts do not submit, laws are sieves, events do not repeat themselves but are infinitely variable and individual." Writers do not build systems, create concepts, shore up laws; when they are at their best they demonstrate how, in some of the most interesting cases, none of these quite applies. "Create a concept," said Ortega y Gasset, "and reality leaves the room." The job of the imaginative writer is sometimes to smash the concept and bring reality back into the room.

Musil knew all this, of course. He must have sensed, in writing the first two parts of his novel, that the philosophical skepticism behind his satire could only take him so far. So in the second half of his novel he decided to go farther—as it turned out, however, much too far. Attempting to reinstate a myth, to found a morality, to build a utopia, if only for two people caught up in an incestuous love, Musil worked at everything but telling his story, whose thread he had irrevocably lost.

In the end, perhaps, it was his hunger for precision, for the kind of truth which philosophy but not fiction can provide, that snuffed the literary flame in Robert Musil. He remained too much the true writer not to know that he had failed—failed grandly, failed heroically, but in the end failed indubitably. Fiction cannot create morality; it can only show what morality is about. Nor is it properly in the business of limning utopias, or endorsing myths. This, to his sorrow, the author of *The Man Without Qualities* came to learn. "The story of this novel," Musil wrote in a note, "amounts to this, that the story that ought to be told is not told." Case, sadly, closed.

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OBSERVATIONS

Grownups and "Kids"

Jonah Goldberg

AMONG THE few things Americans seem to agree on these days is that our children are in trouble; the causes and cures may be debated, but the diagnosis has reached a point of consensus. To judge, however, by the praise showered by legions of adults on a recent film, *Kids*, our children are hardly the only ones in trouble.

Larry Clark, the director of *Kids*, is a fifty-two-year-old ex-convict and drug user who has devoted his professional career to the depiction of children at the nexus of sex, violence, and death. What has shaped his own life, he has said on more than one occasion, is the fact that he underwent puberty late and missed out on what adolescence is all about. "I'm a case of arrested development," he told *New York* magazine. "It's always been a fantasy of mine to go back to high school and do it again." Accordingly, Clark spends much of his time with teenagers, and can frequently be found skateboarding with them in New York's Washington Square Park. His own board is custom-made, emblazoned with the picture of a young girl, winking, bent over with her genitals on display from the rear.

Before directing *Kids*, Clark produced several collections of still photography. His first work, *Tulsa*, a look back at the drugged-out wasteland of his earlier years, earned him a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. His second book, *Teenage Lust*, features photographs of nude teenagers. In one, a girl in a drug-induced stupor lies with a boy on top of her. The caption reads: "They met a girl on acid at Bryant Park at 6 A.M. and took her home. . . ." Other pages in *Teenage Lust* depict a boy with an erection pointing a gun at a tied-up, naked young girl. Yet another collection, *Larry Clark 1992*, contains photographs of a boy dressed only in boxer shorts, a T-shirt, and socks who—gun in mouth and penis faintly visible through his underwear—is, we are informed by Clark, about to commit suicide. Among other ambitions, Clark has admitted a desire to photograph a sexually stimulated young boy in the process of murdering his parents. "God! What a f---ing image!" he says.

Kids is Clark's first foray into film, but it is very much in the tradition of his photographic work. It follows a group of predominantly white teenagers around New York City over a 24-hour period during their summer vacation. The film opens by introducing us to its main character, Telly—a vividly acted "virgin surgeon" whose only aim is to deflower "young baby girls"—in bed with a thriteen-year-old. Telly, it turns out, has AIDS. We learn this when one of his young sexual partners, Jennie, providing moral support, accompanies her sexually promiscuous friend Ruby to a clinic, only to discover that she herself tests positive for the disease. This is a shock because, unlike Ruby, who is found to be HIV-negative, Jennie is something of a novice and a prude: "I only had sex one time, with one boy," she protests.

In the remainder of the film the camera follows Telly, his sidekick Casper, and Jennie on their separate paths. Jennie spends her day searching for Telly, hoping some-

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how to stop him before he victimizes another girl. Meanwhile, Telly and Casper engage in various adventures around Manhattan.

Before heading out for the night, the two boys visit Telly's mother, the only parent visible in the film. She is smoking a cigarette while nursing her newborn baby. Casper ogles her breasts, and later dips a tampon in a glass of red Kool-Aid and proceeds to suck it dry. Telly kicks the family cat, lies to his mother, steals money from his father's hidden stash, and the pair set off for Washington Square Park. On the way downtown, they urinate in public, jump subway turnstiles, all the while conversing in imitation "gangsta rap." At the park they join friends with whom they skateboard, heckle homosexuals, smoke dope, nearly beat a black youth to death in front of numerous bystanders (in one of many wildly implausible scenes), and then plan their engagements for the night.

Telly and Casper have a busy schedule. Telly cajoles a thirteen-year-old girl to go skinny-dipping at a closed public swimming pool. Once there he woos her with the very same lines he had used with success in the film's opening frames. The rest of the group is busy with various distractions: a black teenager proudly exhibits his sexual organ; two girls demonstrate lesbian French-kissing; the boys make unwanted sexual advances to the girls. After the swim, they all adjourn to a party in a home where the parents are away.

And Jennie? Missing Telly at Washington Square Park, she looks for him in a club where a gaggle of teens huddle in a corner groping each other in a drug-induced frenzy. Before she leaves, a friend compels her to take an unidentified pill that reduces her to a dumb stupor. Eventually, Jennie tracks Telly down at the party. But just as she arrives, he is claiming his latest prize in the absent parents' bedroom, his victim shouting in pain. Jennie is too late. Whatever she wanted to say or do, we never learn. She simply turns around, steps out of the room, hobbles over the unconscious teenagers strewn across the floor, and passes out on the couch. The next morning, Casper wakes up in the bathtub, staggers out to the living room, and rapes her as she sleeps. In the last words spoken in the film, he asks, "Jesus Christ, what happened?"

ONE THING that happened is that *Kids* became an instant classic, hyped not only as a great work of art but as a deep cautionary statement for our times. *Film Comment* proclaimed it a "profoundly important and utterly compelling masterpiece." To Gene Siskel, it was "a brilliant depiction of kids adrift without parental involvement." Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* declared it to be a "wake-up call to the world."

Many agreed with this judgment. In fact, when the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), citing the film's "explicit sex, language, drug use, and violence, involving children," had the effrontery to give *Kids* a rating of NC-17, which theoretically would have made it off-limits to viewers under seventeen, a vigorous protest was mounted. Alan Dershowitz and others lodged an appeal with the MPAA to reduce the rating to an R. "I honestly believe," explained Dershowitz, "there will be an outcry from adults wanting to take their kids to see this film." On the other side of the political spectrum, L. Brent Bozell III, chairman of the conservative Media Research Center, went even further. "Hopeless members of this lost generation," he wrote, "should be allowed—forced—to see *Kids*." As the movie's run was extended and its distribution increased, similar endorsements came flocking in.

What is it about *Kids* that has caused so many people, sensible and otherwise, to believe that Larry Clark has written a prescription for America's youth, one that, in Dershowitz's words, will "save lives"?

For one thing, the film, to use the language of its reviewers, is indeed "compelling" and even "spellbinding." The cinematography and acting are technically excellent, and the film—shot with the visual hallmarks of a documentary, but actually scripted down to every expletive and sexual assault—exudes a feeling of realism that, willy-nilly, turns the viewer into a voyeur. As the camera luxuriates over the bodies of young girls screaming with pain in the act of losing their virginity, one cannot help squirming in a combination of anxiety, shame, and—to use the old-fashioned term—prurient interest.

For another thing, *Kids* goes to great lengths to create the impression that these could be anyone's children. Telly evidently comes from a two-parent, working-class family with a stay-at-home mother. His first virgin lives in a posh townhouse on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. When Casper, easily the most unsavory kid in *Kids*, meets Telly's mother, he is for the most part rather polite, giving little hint of his darker side. Jennie is almost certainly well-to-do; she spends hours in taxis, cruising from one end of Manhattan to the other. With such familiar and plausible characters at its center, *Kids*, like many teen films before it, succeeds in part by playing on a deeply rooted and widespread social anxiety: what bad things do good children do when they are out of their parents' sight?

Finally, the film does the one thing that in the 1990's is almost certain to garner critical acclaim for a work of art: it takes up the subject of AIDS. "It's a great film," declared no less an expert than Madonna. "It should be seen by anyone practicing unsafe sex." In *USA Today*, the head of LIFEbeat, the principal AIDS-awareness

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group of the music industry, called *Kids* "a horrifying case study of how the HIV virus spreads" and added: "It's unforgivable that the [NC-17] rating could shut out the very people this film would impact the most."

Yet even aside from the question of whether offering a lecture on "unsafe sex" makes a movie into a masterpiece, there is something peculiar about the way AIDS is portrayed in this film. In *Kids*, the good girls get the dread disease, while the wild girls are HIV-free. This is not moralism, it is rank cynicism. Nor is there the slightest evidence for concluding that Larry Clark, who has patiently explained that his movie is about "sex, sex, *sex*," is trying to save the world from the scourge of AIDS. Adults who choose to believe otherwise have already begun to answer the question of why American children are in trouble.

The notion that some teenager somewhere will be taught to practice safe sex by seeing *Kids* is absurd, and defending the movie on those grounds (as Lynne V. Cheney noted in the *Weekly Standard*) is like defending Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs on the grounds that they warn us about the dangers of sadomasochism. Teenage viewers might just as easily, and much more honestly, take away the opposite moral from this evil movie, the moral which HIV-negative Ruby and her giddy schoolgirl friends loudly embrace in a rap session lovingly captured on film by Larry Clark: "Nothing beats f---ing!"

Music

Words, Music, Opera

Terry Teachout

OPERA BUFFS have conducted a spirited debate over the merits of the Metropolitan Opera's new "Met Titles" system, introduced in October, in which line-by-line English translations of libretti are flashed on computer-controlled screens mounted on the backs of seats. But the debate, while interesting, is also meaningless. All of the arguments for titles are cogent; all of the arguments against them are cogent; and all are irrelevant.

In America as elsewhere, opera is a cruelly expensive business; in this country in particular, it is undertaken with the most modest of subsidies, meaning in effect that it must pay its way. In the entire modern history of opera, titles have done more than anything else to increase the size of the audience. Hence, their survival is assured. Like them or not—and most operagoers appear to like them very much—titles are here to stay.

This is certainly the case at the Met, the most recent major opera house in America to take the plunge. James Levine, the company's artistic director, once said that the Met would introduce titles "over my dead body," a remark so widely quoted that it even appears in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. The speed with which Levine was forced to eat his words is illustrative of the speed with which titles themselves, first used in 1983 by the Canadian Opera Company, have become a fixture on the musical scene. It is hard to name an-

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other artistic innovation—not to mention such a radical one—that has won general acceptance so quickly.

That titles *are* an innovation, and not merely a convenience, is demonstrable—though one would not know this from having listened to Levine or to the Met's general manager, Joseph Volpe, when they formally announced Met Titles at a press conference last spring. For the Met, it seems, titles are merely a nonartistic device to make opera more "user-friendly," the computer-age equivalent of cushioned seats.

In an ad for a captioned PBS telecast of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* last April, the Met proclaimed:

> If anything can untangle *Boccanegra*, English subtitles can. . . . With eight TV cameras focused on the action, and a running translation in subtitles, you'll have an intimate view of all the twists and turns of plot in one of Verdi's most intriguing operas.

This is the utilitarian case for titles, made with more elegance in 1986 by Isaiah Berlin:

> [O]peragoers—and above all those who may either underrate the beauty and depth of operas because they cannot follow the words, or perhaps be deterred from going to see opera altogether—can be converted and illuminated and made enthusiastic by becoming able to understand the meaning, musically and emotionally, of what is going on, instead of being made to listen to mumbo-jumbo.

All this is true as far as it goes—but it does not go nearly far enough. For Met Titles will not only change the way Met audiences respond to opera; they will almost certainly have a significant impact on the company's production style. And given the fact that the Met is the biggest and most influential opera company in America, the effect on American opera as a whole is likely to be profound.

IN EUROPE, opera was sung in the vernacular at most major houses (and all provincial ones) throughout much of the 20th century, and the vernacular tradition remains strong to this day. This has not, however, been the case in America, where—strangely enough—the obstacles facing any company wishing to perform in English have been prohibitive. As the opera director Colin Graham explains:

> Sadly, it is . . . inconvenient to sing operas in the language of the audience, or to write good translations, or to get singers to learn them; it is *particularly* inconvenient for singers to learn intelligible diction in any language, including their own.

As a result, performances in major opera houses in America are usually sung in the original language—whether well or badly is a different matter.

Yet every opera, be it Bizet's tuneful *Carmen* or Alban Berg's atonal *Wozzeck*, offers one kind of experience when its words are understood line by line, and a completely different one when they are not. Even the most dramatically straightforward operas presuppose a moment-to-moment grasp of the plot (though it is certainly less useful in some scenes than others), and the more complex the libretto, the more important it is that the viewer, in order to enter fully into the unfolding action, be able intelligently to relate words to music. Verdi's *Falstaff*, for instance, is full of subtle musical touches that go unnoticed by those who cannot understand the text. (When Ford sings of the cuckold's horns placed on his head by Falstaff, the French horns in the orchestra comment sardonically on his plight.)

The point is that operas, like art-songs, are not abstract musical structures; they are dramas, in which words and music interact to create a total theatrical effect. Without reasonably full comprehension of the words on the part of an audience, opera inevitably becomes pantomime accompanied by music, not integrated musical drama.

This does much to explain the willingness of American audiences to accept "postmodern" productions: that is, ones in which the libretto is treated not as a text but as a set of options which can be discarded or altered at the director's discretion, often in the interests of promoting a particular political line. (Peter Sellars's production of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, for instance, was set in New York's Trump Tower.) Because most American operagoers do not know, except in the most general way, what is happening on stage, they cannot grasp the extent to which such productions may distort the composer's intent.

But postmodernism is not the only problem. The opposite tendency, that of "naturalism," has its own limitations. Opera is not a realistic medium. Like verse-drama and ballet, it is a species of lyric theater, one rendered "unrealistic" by virtue of its defining convention: the fact that its characters sing (and are accompanied by an orchestra) rather than speak. In a sense, all operas are fantasies. That is why naturalistic stage design and acting, which may or may not be theatrically effective in a given production, are never *necessary*; if the opera is good, it is the music that carries the words, not vice versa. The best opera directors accept this primacy of music in creating theatrical illusion; the worst ones swamp it with overblown stage effects which make the music, as it were supererogatory.

THROUGHOUT MOST of the Metropolitan Opera's century-long history, production standards were

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so low that issues like these were beside the point. Despite the intermittent presence of many distinguished conductors and a few talented directors, the Met was a "singers' house," not a setting for the unified dramatic presentations that, since Wagner's time, have been the goal of composers and the ideal of critics. The attraction was virtuoso vocalism. The sets were primitive, the rehearsals minimal, and movement on stage (as the critic Virgil Thomson once wrote acerbically) was "left to the improvisation of the singers."

Not until Rudolf Bing became general manager in 1950 did the Met attempt in any sustained way to raise the theatrical standards of its productions. Bing's innovations were made necessary in part by the long postwar decline in singing, which forced opera houses to seek alternatives to great voices in order to attract audiences. (By 1950, new works had long since ceased to be a drawing card.) Ironically, though, Bing's only lasting contribution to the Met was the building of a new house which in certain ways made dramatically convincing presentations of opera more difficult to achieve than ever before.

The present-day Metropolitan Opera House, which opened in 1966 as part of Lincoln Center, has 3,788 seats and a 54-foot-square stage opening. Because of the size of the stage and the depth of the hall, every one of the Met's productions is by definition "spectacular"; the only variable is the style.

During the 70's and 80's, the company's productions, particularly those staged by Franco Zeffirelli, tended toward the grandiose. Since then, two newer approaches have evolved. The first, an excrescence of the naturalistic style, is exemplified by last season's new production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*; directed by Giancarlo del Monaco and designed by Michael Scott, it featured ultrarealistic sets and a tendency to illustrate every detail of the libretto as literally as possible by corresponding stage action. The Met's new productions of its core Italian and German repertory are increasingly staged in this mode.

The second approach is the postmodernist one, and it has been applied to standard works (like Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*) and nonstandard ones alike. Last season's premiere of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* at the Met, for example, directed by Graham Vick and designed by Paul Brown, updated the action of the opera by several decades and featured such stage decorations as a compact car, a forklift, a cement mixer, and a giant Roy Lichtenstein-type fist on which the word ZAP! was painted in Cyrillic; it also included a fairly explicit scene, an innovation of the director, of simulated sexual intercourse.

OF THE two approaches, it is obvious that postmodernism, for all its excesses and perversities, is infinitely more vital than hypernaturalism, which is an artistic dead end. But both of the Met's current production styles have in common the use of exaggeration to whip up theatrical excitement. And this is hardly surprising. When opera is pantomime instead of drama, exaggeration in whatever form inevitably becomes the *sine qua non* of memorable productions. The novelist Flannery O'Connor once put this point strikingly with regard to fiction:

> When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal ways of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock—to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures.

The same logic applies to the dilemma of large-house opera in an unfamiliar language. To seize and hold the audience's attention, you have to shout. But the good news is that the reverse is equally true: when operatic action is immediately intelligible to audiences, exaggeration becomes superfluous. And that brings us back to Met Titles. Viewers who no longer need to have the plot acted out in broad pantomime are likely to find many details of hypernaturalistic productions unsubtle to the point of crudity; and as for postmodern productions, many viewers will come to realize for the first time that what is happening on the stage frequently contradicts the words and music, and makes literal nonsense of the drama.

Met Titles are bound to have other positive consequences as well (in addition to making it impossible for a fifty-year-old, 275-pound Butterfly to tell Pinkerton she is fifteen years old without causing giggles in the audience). While the problem of creating a feeling of intimacy in such a large hall will not be solved, it will be mitigated to a considerable degree; "connoisseur" operas like *Falstaff*, Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, and Richard Strauss's *Capriccio*, in which a premium is placed on the comprehensibility of dialogue, may thus become theatrically viable at the Met for the first time.

Moreover, the Met's chronic conservatism in repertory—enforced by the need to sell as many tickets as possible—may be eased when the viewer of an unfamiliar opera can understand the plot at first glance, without having previously read the libretto. A chance to test this hypothesis will come as early as January, with the Met premiere of Leoš Janáček's *The Makropulos Case*, a distinguished but "talky" opera by a 20th-century composer whose music is still comparatively unfamiliar outside his native Czechoslovakia.

BUT THE biggest effect of Met

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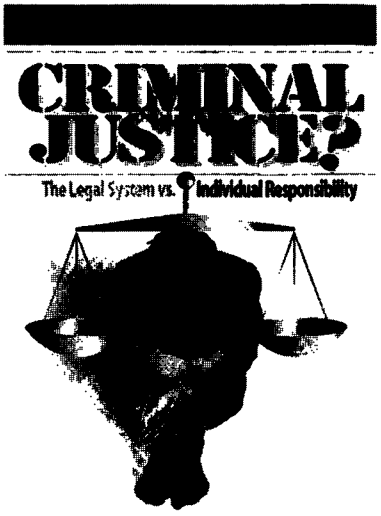
Titles may well be to create a demand for a commodity the Met has never been able consistently to produce at any time in its history: opera as drama.

The most memorable production in the Met's current repertory is that of Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des carmélites*, staged by the late John Dexter during his seven-year tenure (1974-81) as the Met's first and so far only director of productions, and revived with exceptional artistic success two seasons ago. Many of Dexter's productions, especially of standard repertory, were problematic in the extreme. But his eloquent staging of *Dialogues*—which is, significantly, one of the few foreign-language works the Met performs in English—remains one of the company's glories, not least because of its total avoidance of the twin extremes of hypernaturalism and postmodern distortion.

Titles, because they divert attention from the stage, are a less than ideal conduit toward the experience of opera as drama. But for the operagoer they are far better than incomprehension. If they succeed in making the Metropolitan Opera House a place where audiences can expect, and demand, more productions like *Dialogues*, then the face of American opera will be permanently changed.



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Books in Review

Sex, Love & Death

Sabbath's Theater
by Philip Roth
Houghton Mifflin. 451 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Ruth R. Wisse

Isn't it tiresome in 1994, this role of rebel-hero? What an odd time to be thinking of sex as rebellion. Are we back to Lawrence's gamekeeper? At this late hour? . . . What a pathetic, outmoded old crank you are, Mickey Sabbath. The discredited male polemic's last gasp. Even as the bloodiest of all centuries comes to an end, you're out working day and night to create an erotic scandal.

SUBSTITUTE THE name of Philip Roth for that of his protagonist Mickey Sabbath in this passage, and you have a fair and witty put-down of his new novel, *Sabbath's Theater*. Some of Roth's critics through the years have indeed charged that he is nothing but a pornographer, out to create "an erotic scandal." Here, Roth anticipates the attack by airing it, and bringing it up to date: the literary sensation that D. H. Lawrence once created with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, or Philip Roth himself with the dirty sex of *Portnoy's Complaint*, is by now very old-hat; challenges to bourgeois propriety have grown tiresome, especially when coming from such a veteran of the genre; intelligent people should have more important things on their minds. But wait: the character who cleverly chides Mickey Sabbath in this manner is himself a foil, a prim and proper family man whose judgment we accept at peril of selling Sabbath short, and Roth, too.

To anyone who has kept up with Roth's prolific output over the years—*Sabbath's Theater* is his 21st book—this sort of double-bubble ploy is a trademark, and one that has often cost him that fuller imaginative miracle which novels at their best produce. Drawing attention to his own conscious calculations as a writer of fiction, he has again and again blunted the mystery of the fictional life he creates. Thankfully, in *Sabbath's Theater*, the habit is held in check. In this novel, Roth has fashioned an autonomous hero who for the most part manages to break free of his creator while still sharing much of his biography, his habitual preoccupations, and his familiar stand-up-comic routines. In short, Sabbath is what used to be known as a "flesh-and-blood" character.

At sixty-four, Mickey Sabbath, late of New York, now of a small New England town named Madamaska Falls, suffers the death of Drenka Balich, wife and business partner to the local innkeeper, sexual partner to most of the county, and Sabbath's own incomparable love. For thirteen years, Sabbath and his Croatian-born mistress had been fully absorbed by their erotic adventures, which battened on their separate marriages and their simultaneous adventures with others. Only when Drenka discovers that she is dying of ovarian cancer does she demand from Mickey the troth that distinguishes love from lust. The novel opens with Drenka's ultimatum that Sabbath renounce all other women, and ends with Sabbath's realization, a year after her death,

RUTH R. WISSE *is professor of Yiddish literature and comparative literature at Harvard and director of the Harvard Center for Jewish studies.*

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that he can survive her loss. The rest takes place in between, mostly in retrospect.

Sabbath is a puppeteer, forcibly retired from his profession by acute arthritis. (Like the writer of fiction, the puppeteer animates characters through the use of his fingers; unlike his character, Roth appears to have grown artistically more nimble with age.) After a brief failed career in off-Broadway theater, Sabbath and his wife Roseanna Cavanaugh find refuge as teachers in Madamaska Falls, he at a regional college, she in a high school. A sexual scandal with one of his students precipitates Mickey's firing and Roseanna's lunge into alcoholism. Mickey's wickedly comic take on her "recovery" in a treatment center and with a lesbian partner is a politically-incorrect section of this book that the *New Yorker*, which printed its early chapters, would never have excerpted.

IF HIS erotic interests make Mickey Sabbath, in the narrator's words, "the 'missing link' between the respectable 50's and the rambunctious 60's," his attraction to death makes him a guide to the end of this century. The sex in the novel takes place in the past tense, in remembered brothels and bedrooms and bowers. In the present is death: the prolonged death of Drenka; the funeral of Sabbath's one-time theatrical sponsor, Lincoln Gelman, which summons him back to New York; the memory of his first wife, Nikki Kantarakis, whose unexplained disappearance 30 years earlier he now imagines as a murder that he committed; and over and above them all, the never-forgotten death in a single moment of his older brother, Mort, shot down by the Japanese on December 13, 1944, and of his mother, stricken dumb by the news.

Somehow, after Drenka's death, Mickey begins to hear his mother speaking to him from the beyond. In a not-unrelated way, he also recalls that Drenka had used the only money she ever took from him to buy machine tools for her only child, Matthew, and that when Matthew became a policeman, Drenka tuned in to his dispatch radio all night to make sure he was not in trouble. The two insatiable lovers, Mickey and Drenka, thus turn out to be banished children who can never get over the loss of their families and never create adequate ones of their own. Their carnal appetites are as great, and only as great, as their want of family love. Upon losing his beloved mistress and most of his powers of sexual persuasion, Mickey returns to his childhood home like an old dog who has stopped doing tricks, and thinks to die.

The final section of the book is its finest, and possibly the best writing Philip Roth has ever done. When Mickey Sabbath goes "home" to New Jersey to arrange for his own burial, he finds a solitary living relative and a box of his brother's memorabilia, including the Purple Heart "for military merit and for wounds received in action resulting in his death." The encounter with Cousin Fish, an Alzheimer's-ridden centenarian who still lives in the once-Jewish neighborhood of Asbury, and the recovery of letters that his beloved brother sent home from the Pacific, reawaken in Mickey a need to go on living. "How could he kill himself now that he had Morty's things?" Between them, Cousin Fish, a tragicomic spokesman for what we all come to, and the recovered words of Morty, the twenty-year-old U.S. Air Force Apache, succeed in reminding us how sweetly and hopefully Americans once loved their country and enjoyed their physical lives. In its own way, Mickey's final decision against suicide hands an aging America, too, a reprieve.

SINCE THE author mentions it, remember the D.H. Lawrence of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*? And remember the young Philip Roth? Both hailed sex as the great principle of energy, too long controlled by crippling religion and social prohibitions. With preachy earnestness, Lawrence's gamekeeper, Mellors, teaches Lady Chatterley, his aristocratic pupil, how to celebrate nature; in Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, the masturbating Alex Portnoy, in manic glee, escapes the prisonhouse of a Jewish family by freeing the "Id from the Yid." Each author uses explicit language to secularize, to democratize, the sacred secret. Sex, associated with procreation, had always been recognized as the principle of life; but for these liberators, the orgiastic energy of the sexual act takes precedence over the fate of the seed, whether fructified or wasted. (As a Jewish wit said of Roth: "Though he forgot Jerusalem, his right hand did not forget its cunning.")

But now here we are in the middle of the 90's, and life has taken its cue from fiction. The "liberation" has been effected, not only in the mind but in the flesh, and its price, in flushed fetuses and abandoned children, has been beyond counting. Has the severing of fornication from family redounded to human benefit, or to human horror? Philip Roth, at any rate, who perhaps not coincidentally has no children of his own (like D.H. Lawrence, like Henry Miller), is no stranger to such reflections. What reviewers of this book have been slow to acknowledge is how much Roth has in common with cultural conservatives, to the point of seeming willing to acknowledge some of his own pernicious influence in the moral anarchy he sees all around him.

Sabbath's Theater is the (Jewish) sexual liberator's reckoning. Take the scene between Mickey Sabbath and a character named Donald, a recovering alcoholic who "vaguely resemble[s] Sabbath of some 30 years ago." Donald's wife has left him to run off with another woman (as will Mickey's), and he has

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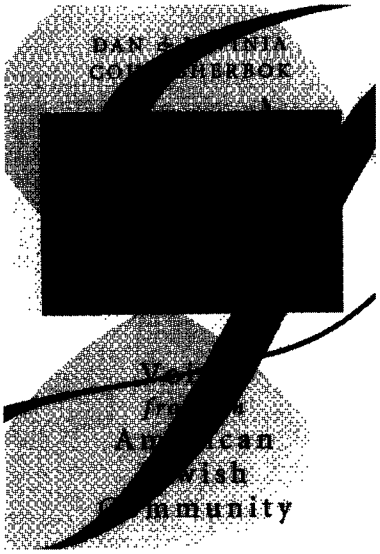

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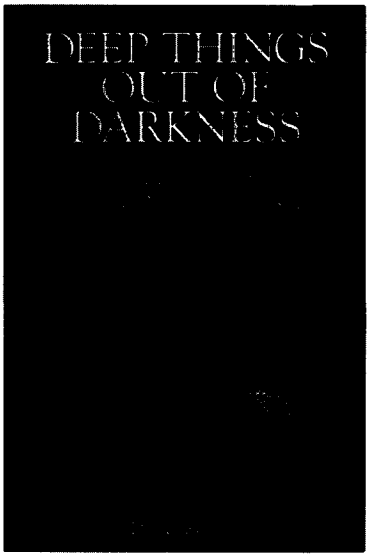

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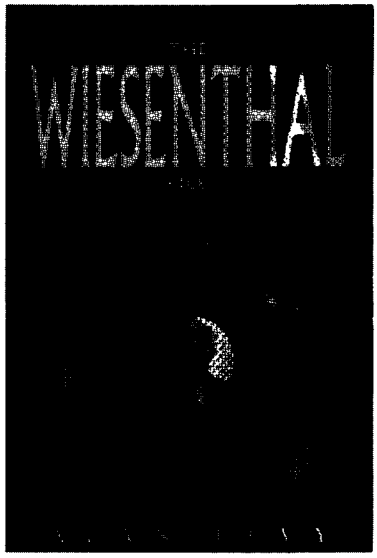

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ISBN 0-8028-3772-7 • 463 pages • Hardcover • $30.00

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just received a description of the ensuing wedding:

> " . . . My ex-wife stood under the *chuppa* with this broad, and when the time came she broke the glass. My wife is a *shiksa*. The two of them are lesbians. This is what Judaism has come to? I can't believe it!"
>
> "Donald, be kind," said Sabbath. "Don't disparage the Jews for wanting to be with it. Even the Jews are up against it in the Age of Total Schlock. The Jews can't win. . . . Either they're mocked because they're still wearing their beards and waving their arms in the air or they are ridiculed by people like [you] for being up-to-the-minute servants of the sexual revolution."
>
> "What if she'd married a zebra?" Donald asked indignantly. "Would a rabbi have married her to a zebra?"
>
> "Zebra or *zebu*?" asked Sabbath.
>
> "What's a *zebu?*"
>
> "A *zebu* is an East Asian cow with a large hump. Many women today are leaving their husbands for *zebus*. Which did you say?"
>
> "Zebra."
>
> "Well, I think not. A rabbi wouldn't touch a zebra. Can't. They don't have cloven hoofs. For a rabbi to officiate at the marriage of a person to an animal, the animal has to chew its cud *and* have a cloven hoof. A camel. A rabbi can marry a person to a camel. A cow. Any kind of cattle. Sheep. Can't marry someone to a rabbit, however, because even though a rabbit chews its cud, it doesn't have a cloven hoof. . . ."

Those who have not yet read the book should be advised that this *shpritz* is far from spent. They should also be advised that, as always when it comes to Jewish matters, the fiercely cerebral Roth has not bothered to check his facts: camels are expressly prohibited under the laws of *kashrut*. But that is not the point. Philip Roth's comedy has long been directed at members of the American rabbinate for their hypocritical perpetuation of a religion in whose purpose (he assumes) they no longer believe. Here, however, he is doing something else, registering the full casualty count of the loss that occurs when an entire culture, rebelling against moral distinctions that are considered too narrow, ceases to make any distinctions at all. The failure of Jews to withstand this general collapse of values is not singled out by him for opprobrium but treated almost kindly; it is the universal madness he is after.

MICKEY SABBATH, self-declared *agent-provocateur*, started out in the 1950's offending the propriety of relatively innocent New Yorkers by exposing a girl's breast in the street. At the time, he could not have known how many old-fashioned prohibitions he then still honored, in common with the policeman who pulled him in. Now, overtaken by a culture of license such as he never dreamed of, he has lived to see the old sexual censors replaced by revolutionary tribunes, whose vigilance on behalf of *their* prohibitions is driven by their knowledge of how easily authority can be overthrown.

Although he still champions sex as vigorously as West Virginians do their right to hunt, Mickey Sabbath is at least as estranged from the Robespierres—and the hermaphrodites—of the 90's as he ever was from polite society. In the hellish afterlife of sexual liberation, he can even be seen taking a place, of sorts, alongside the old, failed authorities of religion and state. Thus we find him at the conclusion of this book, urinating on the grave of his beloved, wearing a skullcap and wrapped in the American flag as his prayer shawl, attempting a mock-religious ritual of resurrection of the flesh. It is not pretty, but it is a close enough emblem of his life and times.

STILL: "ISN'T it tiresome in 1994, this role of rebel-hero?" In the 1950's, a girl could get herself into trouble in Philip Roth's fiction by owning a diaphragm; in the 1990's, all the outrages that Sabbath commits against the corpse of Drenka cannot provoke her son the policeman into arresting him. No matter how hard Sabbath tries to convince Matthew he is serious—"Sensationally serious. Unspeakably serious. Solemnly, recklessly, blissfully *serious*"—the policeman will not play the role of a policeman.

And so it is with Philip Roth and his audience. This is a very funny book, a desperate book, a book that even invites comparison with Roth's beloved Kafka. But the weight of fiction, too, depends on the possibility of outrage. Who is left today to be outraged? In the America of O.J. Simpson, who can object to Philip Roth?

Ultimately, Roth's art falls short of Kafka's—partly because we have lost our capacity for outrage, more because of something else. In Kafka, deprivation, which is the human condition, is unbearable because the deprived never stop craving for life—not sensual life only, but life everlasting. Behind Kafka's sense of the radiating failure of the human enterprise are intimations of God, family joys, sterling friendships, the glory of the Jews, the grand potential of Europe, the wish for profound personal happiness. By contrast, and for whatever reason—his formative childhood and education, his sense of being a Jew and being an American, appear to have been impossibly thin to begin with—images of freedom and community and joy in Philip Roth's work are paltry things at best. In particular, his understanding of the creature impulse of sex as our true source of satisfaction and solace bespeaks a pauper's idea of human potential.

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Kafka's hunger artist is dying to be part of the colorful scene beyond his cage. Roth's goes on snatching peanuts from a crowd that is still amused enough to watch him suffer, but whose moral attention he cannot command.

The Numbers Racket

The Tyranny of Numbers: Mismeasurement and Misrule
by Nicholas Eberstadt
AEI Press. 305 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Kenneth Silber

In the late 1980's, visitors to the Soviet Union noticed that milk was no longer reliably available in ordinary grocery stores. Meanwhile, back in Langley, Virginia, the Central Intelligence Agency was busy churning out elaborate quantitative assessments that showed Soviet economic growth to be proceeding at an impressive pace. According to the CIA, milk production was a particularly vibrant sector of the Soviet economy, the country's per-capita output being some 40-percent higher than that of the United States.

To monitor and forecast Soviet economic trends, the CIA employed a small army of researchers and equipped them with an array of sophisticated computer programs. Altogether these analyses comprised, in Nicholas Eberstadt's words, "probably the largest research project ever undertaken in the social sciences." Yet according to Eberstadt, a demographer at the American Enterprise Institute and at Harvard's Center for Population and Development Studies, the Agency's study was skewed by a variety of factors, ranging from an overreliance on Soviet-supplied data to the CIA's own organizational insularity; as a consequence, American policy-makers had a grossly distorted view of the Soviet economy on the very eve of the system's demise.

For the CIA to have preferred statistical data to the ordinary evidence of the senses was, in fairness, only natural: as Eberstadt writes in *The Tyranny of Numbers*, "the modern state is an edifice built on numbers." Modern governments, he observes, "unlike the diverse governments of earlier times, require statistical information simply . . . to perform the tasks now conventionally assigned to and expected of them."

Intrinsically, perhaps, there is nothing wrong with this, and Eberstadt's own analysis demonstrates that a quantitative approach can yield insight rather than confusion. When dealing with numbers, however, trouble is almost always close at hand. Statistics can easily convey a false impression of certainty and precision; this, in turn, can encourage governments to undertake ambitious but unwise interventions in the lives of their citizens. In *The Tyranny of Numbers*, a collection of essays most of which have been published previously, Eberstadt ferrets out the misleading numbers that have fed public misconceptions, distorted intellectual discourse, and degraded the quality of government policy-making.

One such number, tirelessly rehearsed by liberal groups advocating increased government spending, is the official U.S. poverty rate. This indicator—which rose sharply during the late 70's and early 80's—has been criticized for ignoring regional cost-of-living variations and for setting arbitrary poverty thresholds for different types and sizes of households. For his part, Eberstadt adduces a still

Kenneth Silber *writes about politics and economics for* Insight *and other publications.*

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more fundamental shortcoming: by focusing on income rather than consumption, the poverty rate measures the wrong thing.

Official poverty-rate calculations, Eberstadt shows, neglect to factor in such non-cash government benefits as food stamps and Medicaid, and therefore understate the purchasing power of low-income households. By contrast, a consumption-based index, one which measured household expenditure rather than income, would have revealed not an increase but a steady *decline* in poverty during the period under study.

Interestingly, the federal government's use of an income-based measure arose from little more than bureaucratic expediency. When the rate was devised in the early 1960's, consumption figures had been collected only through occasional surveys, while income statistics had been compiled annually, and a staff specializing in such data was already in place. The consequence of this chance circumstance has been an official poverty rate which has greatly exaggerated the degree of material deprivation in America, and which has also diverted attention away from the growing problem of dependency on government largesse.

Another figure given close attention in *The Tyranny of Numbers* is our infant-mortality rate. High by international standards, it is often invoked as evidence of the need for expanding the government's role in health care. Eberstadt's analysis, however, suggests that the crucial variable is not the accessibility of medical services but rather personal behavior. In fact, the American medical system outperforms its foreign counterparts in treating low-birthweight babies, but is unable to keep pregnant women from high-risk activities. There is, Eberstadt contends, a correlation between illegitimacy and infant mortality, and it has been deliberately neglected by public-health officials reluctant to compile the relevant data; such studies, after all, would invite accusations of "blaming the victim."

TRAINING his sights farther afield, Eberstadt adroitly dissects the myth, propagated by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), that the third-world debt crisis imperils the well-being and even the lives of millions of children around the globe. According to UNICEF, interest payments on debt constitute a massive transfer of resources from poor to rich nations, severely retarding efforts by the former to improve health and education.

This pious accusation is starkly contradicted, Eberstadt demonstrates, by the fact that the flow of funds to the "underdeveloped" world has remained strongly positive, with much new lending taking place on highly concessional terms. Indeed, the general situation of the third world, painted in such dark colors by the international bureaucracies, turns out, on close inspection, to be better than commonly supposed. Fears of a global food shortage, for example, are often based on sloppy measurements which fail to take into account the increasing substitution of high-quality crops for low. School enrollment throughout the third world has been rising for decades and shows no sign of reversal. Finally, Eberstadt can find no link between malnutrition estimates and actual mortality rates.

The Tyranny of Numbers closes with a warning that, if one projects forward from present population trends, an ever-larger share of humanity will be living under non-democratic governments in the early 21st century. This argument, dependent as it is on the premise that current political regimes will remain intact, is one of the most speculative and least compelling of Eberstadt's own forays into statistical theorizing. But his prediction of an international order in which democracy retreats before demography provides a thought-provoking ending to an eclectic, iconoclastic, and welcome book.

Genius & Plod

In Search of Churchill:
A Historian's Journey
by Martin Gilbert
Wiley. 338 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
James W. Muller

IN THE summer of 1915, having been sacked as First Lord of the Admiralty during the troubled Dardanelles campaign, Winston Churchill made preparations to go to the battlefield on his government's behalf. Though the trip never came off, Churchill did write a letter to his wife to be opened in the event of his death. Eager to vindicate his conduct of affairs at the Admiralty, he asked her to gather his papers: "There is no hurry; but some day I should like the truth to be known. Randolph will carry on the lamp." Churchill was obviously taking the long view; in 1915, his son was four years old.

Randolph was in fact busy at work on the official biography when his father died a half-century later. But then Randolph himself died in 1968 after completing only two volumes, leaving the task to one of his research assistants, Martin Gilbert. Now a very well-known Oxford scholar, Gilbert has produced many important works on the Holocaust and on Jewish history in addition to his labors on Churchill, which are simply prodigious.

Gilbert's principal work, in eight stout volumes, traces Churchill's

JAMES W. MULLER, *who teaches political science at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, is currently the Archives By-Fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge.*

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thoughts and actions virtually day by day. Joining it is a series of extremely useful companion volumes, some over a thousand pages long, containing much of the raw material that went into the making of the biography. Fifteen of these are in print; at least eight more are expected. And mounted on top of it all is a highly readable single-volume biography, which in several respects improves on the original.

Now Gilbert has given us *In Search of Churchill: A Historian's Journey*. In it, the biographer himself, hitherto retiring to a fault, moves closer to center stage. As he explains in the preface, the theme of the book is Gilbert's own lifelong search for "the character, struggles, and achievements of Churchill." This search began with Churchill's V-E Day address, which Gilbert heard on the radio as a small boy. It continued when, after defeat at the hands of Labor in 1945, Churchill fell into academic neglect. This, together with the fierce disagreements over Churchill among Britons, further provoked the young Gilbert's curiosity.

It was an invitation to join Randolph's biographical "factory" at East Bergholt, Suffolk, in 1962 that set Gilbert on the way to his life's career. (The warden of his college at Oxford assured him that "the whole thing could not possibly last more than six months.") *In Search of Churchill* gives us a good portrait of Randolph, whom Gilbert depicts as exacting and irascible—he dubbed himself the "Beast of Bergholt"—but also loyal, forgiving, and generous with his "young-gentlemen" researchers. Indeed, even as he enters his criticisms of Randolph's contribution to the biography, Gilbert takes pains to stress the debt he owes his mentor. Randolph's irrepressible curiosity, his mastery of reference books, his insistence on getting the story straight, his enthusiasm when a "lovely grub" was uncovered, and his rigorous methods of work all made their impression on a grateful understudy.

Gilbert was given a roving commission to talk to anyone who remembered Winston Churchill—friends, colleagues, family, secretaries—and he carried it out with exemplary diligence and to exceptional effect. In pursuing the story of Churchill's dismissal from the Admiralty, for example, he came across the romantic correspondence between Prime Minister H.H. Asquith and Venetia Stanley, which explained why Asquith was so distracted during the Dardanelles crisis; in working on Church-

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ill's speeches to Parliament in the 1930's on the deficiencies of British military strength, he tracked down the names of his secret informants; and so forth. Again and again, in reading this book one is struck by how much Gilbert's biography of Churchill has contributed to our knowledge not only of its subject, but of a good chunk of the 20th century.

In Search of Churchill also provides a useful and much-needed tutorial on the art of historical research. In Gilbert's refusal to deprecate great men, his warnings against sloppy scholarship, his rueful admission of unwitting errors in his own work, even in his reminder that historians often overlook the importance of the weather, there is an implicit rebuke and an excellent corrective to many bad habits that plague the contemporary writing of history.

Still, the most enjoyable aspect of this book is what it tells us not about Martin Gilbert but about Winston Churchill. There is, for instance, Churchill's advice to a Scottish duchess about where to place a podium for his nemesis Neville Chamberlain: it could go anywhere, he said, "as long as [Chamberlain] has the sun in his eyes and the wind in his teeth"; or the letter to his brother Jack from his country retreat, where he rejoiced in having "all the essentials of life . . . hot baths, cold champagne, new peas, and old brandy."

Gilbert informs us that some of the most famous "facts" about Churchill are apocryphal. Despite his best efforts, he has never been able to turn up the telegram which was reputedly sent to every ship in the fleet when Churchill returned to the Admiralty in 1939: "Winston is back." Nor can he authenticate Churchill's famous alleged put-down of the traditions of the Royal Navy as amounting to "rum, sodomy—and the lash." Though the underground Cabinet War Rooms are even today one of London's premier tourist attractions, it seems that—sentimental myth notwithstanding—Churchill rarely spent a night there during the Blitz, preferring to take his chances in an above-ground apartment around the corner. Finally, despite all the tales of Churchill's drinking, we learn from Gilbert that those around him never saw him drunk; rather, they watched him nurse the same weak whiskey-and-soda all morning.

NEAR THE end of this book, Gilbert tells us that his "search for Churchill heightened my sense of the ability of a single person to influence events, and of the impact of leadership in both the foreign and domestic scene." How did Churchill manage to do so much? Readers of *In Search of Churchill* will be struck by the ruthless agenda he set for himself; by his phenomenal powers of concentration; by how he learned to make two days out of one, and not to "waste a single talent." Harold Macmillan claimed that Churchill never missed anything said in conversation, though he may have appeared not to be listening, and Adlai Stevenson was dazzled by his ability to recall speeches memorized 60 years before. To his son Randolph, Churchill once said that he hated "to go to bed at night feeling I have done nothing useful in the day."

In gauging the sources of Churchill's achievement, Gilbert points to a verse by Longfellow much favored by both Randolph and his father:

> The heights by great men reached and kept,
> Were not attained by sudden flight,
> But they, while their companions slept,
> Were toiling upward in the night.

To rise in the world, one of Churchill's correspondents told him in his youth, takes "genius and plod." It has been Martin Gilbert's achievement to help us see how, and in what measure, Churchill possessed both of these gifts, and never neglected either.

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A Charming Communist

In Confidence
by Anatoly Dobrynin
Times Books. 672 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
Gabriel Schoenfeld

Would it have been better to cage or to tame the Soviet beast? And how to do either? In the closing decades of the cold war, with the shadow of the mushroom cloud hovering over the West, few questions provoked more vehement debate. Even today, with the conflict receding into memory, a maze of disputation continues, with hawks claiming credit for America's victory, doves arguing that the hawks themselves prolonged the cold war and augmented its frightening risks, and architects of détente insisting on the correctness of their policy.

Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to the United States from 1962 to 1986, has now entered the fray with this remarkably candid memoir. It supplies, in unequal portions, an abundant stock of additional ammunition to all sides. Dobrynin's own position is clear enough: he sympathizes greatly with the advocates of détente and expresses deep regret that they did not prevail. But in the scathing critique of Soviet foreign policy he offers along the way, he also provides ample evidence that on all the hotly contested issues of the cold war the hawks were, for the most part, right all along.

Based upon archival documents and voluminous contemporaneous notes, *In Confidence* recounts in absorbing detail what Dobrynin saw and heard and said during his four decades in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, a period in which he was intimately involved both in the humdrum diplomacy of détente and in most of the terror-inducing eruptions of the cold war.

One such eruption took place in 1962 at the very beginning of his tenure in Washington. Having, at age forty-three, ascended with astonishing speed to the position of ambassador to the United States, Dobrynin found himself a participant in a crisis which brought his country to the very threshold of nuclear war. The Kremlin, by diplomatic cable, instructed him to reassure President John F. Kennedy via his brother Robert (the Attorney General) that the USSR had not deployed anything but defensive weaponry in Cuba. Of course the very opposite was the case. The fact that he was thus used by his own government to mislead, Dobrynin now writes in his memoirs, "remained a moral shock to me for years to come."

In 1968, moral shock notwithstanding, Dobrynin was instructed to convey still another troublesome message to the White House, on this occasion telling President Lyndon Johnson the rather more varnished falsehood that in Czechoslovakia there had occurred "a conspiracy of internal and external reaction against the social system," and that in entering that country in force the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies were merely responding to a request by the government in Prague for help.

As his bit parts in the Cuban and Czechoslovakian dramas suggest, throughout the cold war Dobrynin exhibited unflinching allegiance to Moscow's cause. To his credit, he

Gabriel Schoenfeld, *associate editor of* Commentary, *has written widely on Russian affairs.*

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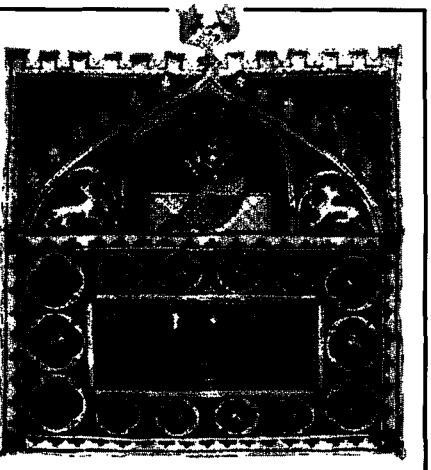

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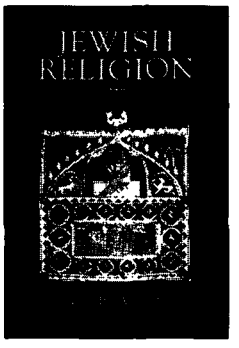

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makes no attempt to camouflage this, as other Communist officials have done in recent memoirs, by recasting himself as a closet dissident who labored behind the scenes to perform some hidden good. Instead, Dobrynin proclaims himself "a true believer in Marxism-Leninism," though one whose mind was no longer "clogged" by Stalin's "ideological blunders," and he is openly proud of the honors that were conferred upon him for his constancy. Thus, Leonid Brezhnev's last official act before his "tragic" demise in 1982 was to bestow upon Dobrynin the title of Hero of Socialist Labor, and the gold medal of the Hammer and Sickle, the Soviet Union's highest civil award. "Needless to say," reports Dobrynin, "I was extremely pleased."

Yet for all his fidelity to the likes of Brezhnev and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko (a man described variously in this book, and without a trace of irony, as "kind-hearted," "honest," "decent," and "a disciple of Stalin" who "did not attach much importance to moral aspects of foreign policy such as human rights"), Dobrynin had an extraordinary and, for a Soviet diplomat, entirely anomalous quality—he was disarmingly at ease and at home in the salons of capital and the corridors of power in the West. Henry Kissinger has described him as "suave not by Soviet standards—which leave ample room for clumsiness—but by any criteria." Even as he put an approbative spin on Moscow's every step, from the persecution of dissidents to the downing of KAL 007, he succeeded in enjoying a reputation in Washington as a subtle, intelligent, and charming Communist, a man with whom one could have a frank and confidential talk (confidential, that is, up until the publication of this book).

THE ESSENCE of Moscow's foreign-policy problem, as it emerges from Dobrynin's explication of it in *In Confidence*, was that the Kremlin's policy-making flaws could not be fixed; they flowed inexorably from the fundamentally deformed character of the regime. Its leaders had inherited "Stalin's gravest legacy"—the USSR's isolation in the world. Brezhnev and his generation, as a consequence, were trapped in "ideological bondage," in thrall to the "abracadabra" of Marxism-Leninism. Though the Kremlin leaders had managed to transform the USSR into a great power by dint of the enormous sacrifices they extracted from the population, they were incapable of seeing the world as it was, let alone of steering their superpower on a sustainable course. Instead, impelled by ideological considerations, they engaged in behavior which subverted their own considerable achievements, the most significant of which was détente with the United States.

As Dobrynin acknowledges and as Western hawks maintained all along, Brezhnev conceived of détente not as a code of conduct for harmonizing U.S.-Soviet relations but as part and parcel of the "Marxist-Leninist 'class approach' to foreign affairs, which cast even peaceful relations into a mold of confrontation." In line with this conception, Brezhnev persisted with provocative military and diplomatic measures designed to gain power and influence and to diminish the relative strength of the United States and the West.

There was, for one thing, the Soviet arms build-up, dismissed by Western doves and partisans of détente as the product of insecurity and bureaucratic inertia, but described by Dobrynin as being conducted without restraint on orders from Brezhnev himself. Nor was it the United States that provoked this military build-up (as the Kremlin, and many Western intellectuals, alleged at the time). For example, operating on the principle of "catch up with America and leave it behind," the Soviet

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Union, Dobrynin writes, deployed nuclear-tipped SS-20 missiles and thereby

> set off another sharp spiral in the strategic and conventional arms race, even though we were already well ahead of the United States in the number of armored vehicles, artillery pieces, and self-propelled launchers but behind in some strategic weaponry.

According to Dobrynin, Soviet leaders were initially "pleased by the strengthening of Soviet nuclear potential on the European theater"; but their hopes for advantage were based upon a misjudgment of Western resolve. Whatever benefits had accrued to the USSR began to dissipate when NATO unexpectedly initiated a counter-build-up by moving to deploy the American Pershing II missile in 1979. And after Ronald Reagan came to power, Moscow's decision to field the SS-20 was revealed to be, in Dobrynin's words, "disastrous." For Reagan "stuck to his guns against all Soviet attempts to block the deployment of the American missiles."

Indeed, the ascent of Ronald Reagan to power emerges in Dobrynin's account as a key turning point for the USSR. Two elements of Reagan's foreign policy appear to have particularly disconcerted the Kremlin. First, by means of dramatic increases in the defense budget and through his devotion to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), Reagan was clearly bent on restoring America's preeminent military position and reversing Soviet gains. Second, inspired by "gross and even primitive anti-Sovietism," the gun-slinging President embarked on an unprecedented ideological offensive against both Moscow and its allies.

Previous Presidents, to be sure, had criticized the USSR's peculiar domestic arrangements. But for the most part this criticism had been delivered quietly, through diplomatic channels. Exceptions, like President Ford's appeal to Moscow for Jewish emigration on the eve of the 1976 presidential elections, were usually softened by private assurances of remorse. Thus, after Ford issued his statement on Soviet Jewry, Brent Scowcroft, the President's National Security Adviser, telephoned Dobrynin to plead "for patience and understanding for another 48 hours," assuring him that the "madhouse" would soon be over and that after the election everything would be "back to normal."

The Carter administration, too, castigated the USSR's domestic practices in public, eliciting Moscow's "indignation, irritation, and concern." But despite its genuine unhappiness with Carter, the Kremlin believed it had established a valuable channel to his administration in the person of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. When Brezhnev sent a bitterly acrimonious rebuke to Carter for having corresponded with Andrei Sakharov—an "apostate," in the words of Brezhnev's barbed epistle, who had "proclaimed himself the enemy of the Soviet state"—Vance replied via Dobrynin that although he was "not completely in agreement" with the missive, "it is important that the President should receive exactly such a letter now."

On another occasion, Vance explained to Dobrynin the "psychological underlay" that impelled the President to denounce Moscow for violating human rights: Carter, said Vance, was anxious "about being regarded as a firm and resolute

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President, and not just in Moscow but in his own country." Comments Dobrynin: "Vance and I understood one another; after all, we were professionals."

With Reagan, however, things were completely different. Although Dobrynin dismisses the idea that the pressure the Reagan administration brought to bear on Moscow precipitated the Soviet collapse—attributing the implosion instead to internal factors, and advancing the proposition that "Reagan struck it lucky"—he gives the President far more credit for dealing shrewdly with the USSR than those here at home who sneered at Reagan's "evil empire" speech and "Star Wars" program. "The President proved to be a much deeper person than he first appeared," writes Dobrynin, "he was endowed with natural instinct, flair, and optimism. . . . His imagination supported big ideas like the SDI."

EVEN IF Dobrynin is correct, as I believe he is, that in the final analysis the USSR collapsed under the dead weight of its own insolvent institutions, the alarm and apprehension that Reagan inspired in the Kremlin, so evident in this account, clearly played an important destabilizing role. Coinciding as it did with Brezhnev's descent into senility while still in office, which was in turn followed by the intense domestic uncertainty of having an ailing Yuri Andropov and then Konstantin Chernenko briefly at the helm, Reagan's uncompromising approach had the effect of tightening the rack several painful notches on a system already under mounting strain. It then required only a caress from Mikhail Gorbachev's maladroit hand for the system to snap apart.

Which brings us to a curious gap in the autopsy that Anatoly Dobrynin has performed with such admirable candor on the corpse of Soviet foreign policy. In *In Confidence* he does not reprove Soviet foreign policy because it was in any way wrong, because it enslaved whole countries, poisoned whole societies, destroyed lives without number. There is not a word of regret in these memoirs for the fate of his own countrymen who, by daring to protest the policies of the Kremlin, chose a course far more arduous than his own and ended up spending long years in prisons and camps.

No, Dobrynin's indictment of Soviet foreign policy does not rest on ethical grounds. When he joined the Foreign Ministry as a promising young man in 1946, the USSR had just acquired dominion over the largest stake of territory of any empire in the history of the world. By the time he retired as an active diplomat, the Soviet superpower had disappeared, and the borders of the new Russian successor state approximated those of the diminutive territory held by Moscow in 1653 during the reign of Aleksei the Quietest One, the second Romanov czar.

In Dobrynin's view, Soviet foreign policy is to be condemned not because it was in any way morally deficient: morality is a category he does not appear to apprehend. Rather, led by men whose minds were prisoners of dogmas about the necessity of unrelenting "struggle with the capitalist world," and whose "ignorant notions" about the West were founded largely on "what they read in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*," the Soviet Union proved incapable of passing the single objective test recognized by his own more prudential version of the Marxian creed: miserably, contemptibly, wretchedly, it failed.

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MCDONNELL DOUGLAS CORPORATION GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY

Guaranteed Notes due 2006 for Two McDonnell Douglas MD-11 Aircraft

The undersigned acted as financial advisor to McDonnell Douglas Corporation and placement agent for the Notes.

May 1993

$240,000,000

GENERAL ELECTRIC CAPITAL CORPORATION

Leveraged Lease Financing of Two Boeing 747-433 Combi Aircraft

The undersigned arranged the participation of and acted as advisor to the Equity Investor.

March, July 1994

$52,350,000

MCDONNELL DOUGLAS CORPORATION

Off-Balance Sheet Financing of Two McDonnell Douglas MD-83 Aircraft

The undersigned arranged both transactions and acted as financial advisor to McDonnell Douglas Corporation.

September 1994

$104,000,000

ALASKA AIRLINES, INC.

Secured Debt Financing of Four McDonnell Douglas MD-83 Aircraft

The undersigned acted as financial advisor to Alaska Airlines, Inc. and co-placement agent for the Notes.

May 1994

AIRBUS INDUSTRIE

Lease Restructuring of A300B4-203 Aircraft

The undersigned initiated the transaction and acted as financial advisor to Airbus Industrie.

February 1994

$380,000,000

UNITED TECHNOLOGIES CORPORATION

Lease Advisory Services for Four Boeing 767-300ER Aircraft

The undersigned acted as financial advisor to the Pratt & Whitney division of United Technologies Corporation.

Current

TRANS WORLD AIRLINES, INC.

Lease Restructuring and Aircraft Acquisitions

The undersigned acts as financial advisor to Trans World Airlines, Inc.

August 1994

$90,000,000

AMERICAN AIRLINES, INC.

Japanese Leveraged Lease for Two Boeing 757-200 Aircraft

The undersigned acted as financial advisor to the Lessor.

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